# The Black Cat

FOR JULY

10 CENTS

In this number
"Clothes Don't Make the Man"
we think is the funniest
story we ever published
What do you think?

America

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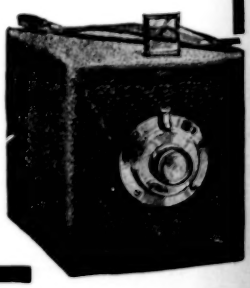

# The Black Cat

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The Black Cat

# Clothes Don't Make the Man

(A story without a moral)

BY M. B. PHIPPS

THERE are but few men, who, after the trying ordeal of a hot, dusty, all night journey in the stuffy confines of a day coach, are able to preserve a dignified bearing. The Honorable John Heston was one of the exceptions; and now, as he dismissed the bell boy with the Canadian dime which he had saved for such an occasion, his features did not relax from their expression of stern, unyielding determination.

As the bell boy closed the door with an expressive bang, Mr. Heston seated himself and extracted from an inside pocket a crumpled sheet of yellow paper. He knew the wording of that telegram by heart, but he carefully perused it once more. It ran as follows:

> Don't believe all the rot in the papers. I was not drunk. The man we hit deliberately jumped in front of us. It wasn't our fault —anyhow; he isn't much hurt. It is just a shyster hold up. It's an awful mess though, and if you will come on and straighten things out I'll be eternally grateful. Mr. Cohen of Black, Cohen, McCarthy and Knight, in the Century Building, is my attorney. Do come to the rescue, Dad, just this once more. I am going to cut it all out in the future.
>
> Jack.

The cheerful disregard for expense, (it had not been sent as a night message,) was not lost upon Mr. Heston, for the telegram had been marked "collect." The hard line about his mouth tightened as he crossed to the telephone and proceeded to look up the number of Messrs. Black, Cohen, McCarthy and Knight.

"This is Mr. John Heston speaking," he announced. "I am given to understand that my son, Mr. John Heston, Jr., has retained you as counsel."

Mr. Cohen, at the other end of the wire, suavely replied that Mr. Heston, Sr., had not been deceived.

"Then," Mr. Heston, Sr., continued, "I want you distinctly to understand that you must look to your client for your fee. He is of age, and I refuse absolutely to have anything to do with him. I left home immediately upon the receipt of his telegram, prepared once more to come to his assistance, but after reading on the train the newspaper accounts of the disgraceful affair, I have decided to wash my hands of the whole matter, and nothing which you or my son may say can alter my determination. Good bye."

And before the first words of protest from Mr. Cohen could reach his ears, Mr. Heston had hung up the receiver. Thus passing upon the predicament of his only son, who, for aught he knew, was still languishing in jail, Mr. Heston turned his attention to his own affairs. A bath and sleep, he decided, would not be amiss, especially as the first train back did not leave the city for several hours.

And right here is where Fate took a hand in the affairs of the Heston family; or, possibly, Fate had already

intervened when Mr. Heston, contrary to his usual carefulness, had neglected to lock the door after the disgruntled bell boy's departure. Or, perhaps, what is more likely, Fate loomed up on the horizon when a Canadian dime was transferred to a boy's expectant palm. Had the coin been the quarter which, according to our best hotel etiquette, the occasion demanded, the door would not have been slammed so hard as to rebound beyond the spring lock.

Be that as it may, while Mr. Heston lay motionless in the bath tub, his tired spirit lulled to semi-consciousness by the tepid water, a gentleman of prepossessing appearance tripped lightly down the hotel corridor. The fact that the door of Mr. Heston's apartment stood ajar did not escape his attention; the prepossessing gentleman made his living, and, from his appearance it seemed a fairly good living, by not allowing any such details to escape his attention. Pausing long enough to make sure that no one was in sight, he pushed open the door, and, with the key to his own room held in plain view of anyone who might be within, entered, and closed the door behind him.

Mr. Heston remained blissfully unconscious of what was taking place in his bedroom, until, rousing himself at last from his doze, his glance happened to wander through the half-open door and rest upon the mirror. For an instant he sat paralyzed, watching with fascinated interest the reflection of a debonair gentleman who seemed to be occupied in closing a bulging travelling bag. Mr. Heston gasped, and as he gasped he sprang from the tub and rushed into the bedroom. Apparently he was unexpected, for the gentleman with the travelling bag, Mr. Heston's travelling bag, seemed somewhat startled, but the catapult-like entrance of a person of cadaverous appearance, clad in the costume prescribed for the most informal hours at a Turkish bath, is enough to startle anyone.

Unfortuately for Mr. Heston, the bed lay between him and the object of his interest, and when he had managed to skid around the foot of the bed, both object and bag were disappearing through the door. The flying leap which he made for the escaping coat tails would have filled John Heston, Jr., with admiration, had he been there to witness the exhibition; but sad to relate, the attempted tackle failed. That it was a game attempt to bring down a runner from behind, seemed to bring no consolation to Mr. Heston's sorely tried soul, for, even as he stumbled through the open doorway and crashed into the opposite wall, he set up a cry of "Stop thief!" Down the corridor, which now reverberated with Mr. Heston's cries, the thief, instead of stopping as per request, flew with an amazing burst of speed, and disappeared around a corner.

The slam of a door close at hand, the distant sound of hurrying footsteps, and a sinking sensation at the pit of the stomach seemed to reach Mr. Heston simultaneously, although, in reality, the sinking sensation was the direct result of the slamming door and the hurrying steps. The door in question was none other than the one leading to Mr. Heston's apartment, and, upon this occasion, as the unfortunate gentleman immediately discovered, the spring lock had done its duty.

The east wind has been responsible for much mischief, but never, from Mr. Heston's viewpoint, had it played such a diabolical prank as this.

The foosteps were rapidly approaching when Mr. Heston, abandoning his futile efforts to force the door, fled in panic-stricken terror in search of some haven of refuge. A scandalized feminine shriek and the slam of yet another

door, gave him the pleasant information that he had not been unobserved and, in wild-eyed frenzy, he sought something, anything, which might serve to shield his nakedness from a jeering world. A cocoa fibre mat outside the door of some favored guest caught his attention, and, as it was the one and only thing movable in sight, (one might think that the hotel management expected the arrival of a college football team,) he made a dash for it.

Now, a cocoa fibre door mat has its uses in this world, and it probably fulfills its destiny just as successfully as do many other things with a higher mission in life, but as a substitute for wearing apparel it is a dismal failure; nor can it be said that it meets with much success as an understudy for a piece of garden shrubbery, behind which unfortunate naked gentlemen may hide. Mr. Heston had added but little to his personal adornment when frantcally he seized upon the cocoa fibre door-mat.

"This is a nightmare," he moaned, "and I'll wake up in a minute, I know, but it's awful, awful!"

And the distracted man kept repeating, "I'll wake up in a minute; I'll wake up in a minute," as he dashed back and forth.

The words "Service Room," painted on a door past which Mr. Heston had several times hurtled in unseeing terror, at last forced themselves upon his notice. He made for that room like a homing pigeon, and fell into its sheltering darkness just too late to be unseen by the person of the heavy tread, who at that instant, made his appearance.

The title "Service Room" was a misnomer, for the room was merely a closet, but its musty odor of old brooms, damp mops, and yellow soap was, to Mr. Houston's quivering nostrils, as a spice-laden breeze from Araby the Blest. He was not destined, however, long to enjoy the privacy of his wildly sought refuge.

When the heavy foosteps halted outside his closet door, Mr. Heston's ears were assailed by a shrill feminine voice. "He's in there," the voice said, "in that service room."

"It's all right, now, ma'am," a masculine voice assured her, "I'll have him outer there in a jiffy." And then the voice was drowned in a perfect bedlam of semi-hysterical conversation, which, to Mr. Heston's tortured mind, seemed to emanate from every door along the corridor. It was quite evident that his cry of "Stop thief" had reached other ears than those of the despoiler of his wardrobe and the owner of the heavy footsteps.

In the struggle which ensued, Mr. Heston was clearly at a disadvantage, for one hand was employed in the obvious necessity of adjusting the intricate folds of his cocoa fibre mat draperies. Presently the door was yanked open, and with the door, came Mr. Heston, clinging tenaciously to the handle.

"For the love o' Mike," gasped the heavy footsteps person, a house detective, "where'd you come from?"

The redoubled chorus of female shrieks would have drowned any answer which the unhappy man might have made even had he been in a condition for coherent speech, which, most decidedly, he was not. Mr. Heston was a man of great natural dignity, but even Mr. Heston, his son's opinion to the contrary notwithstanding, was human, and —well, even an ex-vice-president of these more or less United States could scarcely, under similar circumstances, be expected to retain that dignity of bearing for which he is noted. No, a gentleman whose entire visible wardrobe consists of a hastily devised toga, a toga which but an instant before had appeared to the world as a door mat and nothing

else, cannot fairly be held to account if his dignity, for the nonce, seems to have disappeared into thin air.

"Say," announced the detective somewhat belligerently, and with less tact than a hotel employee is supposed to use toward paying guests, "if you women is so horrified at seeing a naked man there ain't no law compellin' you to stand peekin' out o' your doors, you know."

The response to this observation was the instant and indignant slamming of many doors, but, by the time Mr. Heston had been soothed to a condition in which he was able to inform the detective whence he had come, they were all again open, and twenty pairs of sensation-seeking eyes followed the line of march to Mr. Heston's room. No gauntlet ever contrived by blood-thirsty redskins could have held the terror for its unfortunate victim as did that double row of eyes for the cringing wretch with the door mat.

With the aid of his pass key the detective opened the door to Mr. Heston's room and glanced about. The one thing noticeable was the entire lack of anything not the property of the hotel. The visitor had made a clean sweep, not even scorning to take Mr. Heston's soft coal smoked collar.

"Why," his captor exclaimed, "this ain't your room; this room's empty." And the unfortunate part of it was, that by this time the only thing of which Mr. Heston was absolutely sure, was that he was in the midst of the most unpleasant nightmare he had ever experienced. No, he wasn't sure, the detective probably was right; undoubtedly, this was not his room. He didn't know where it was; he thought he remembered the number was 816, but he wasn't sure; if this was 816, and it was not his room, as the detective assured him it was not, then he didn't know where it was. He had reached the state of mind that when his inquisitor asked if he had taken it with him when he went to give his Salome act in the corridor, he could not be certain about it.

"It's the nut fact'ry for yours, all right," the detective cheerfully informed him. "You come along with me."

With his door mat replaced by a blanket stripped from the bed in room 816, Mr. Heston meekly followed his captor to the service elevator, and presently found himself in the trunk room surrounded by a group of grinning porters.

"Now," the detective whom the porters addressed as Mr. Clancy reasoned aloud, "it ain't likely you was dressed in that there door mat when you come in, so your clothes must be somewheres around. You can't seem to remember the number of your room, so I guess I'll try and locate it for you before I telephone for the wagon."

"My clothes were stolen," Mr. Heston exclaimed, convinced at last that he was not enjoying a most realistic nightmare; "they were stolen while I was in the bath tub."

"Stolen, eh?" Mr. Clancy, with a wink at the porters, commented sympathetically, "now, that's too bad, ain't it."

The detective, not unnaturally, had jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Heston was demented, and, detective-like, it was extremely difficult for him to adjust his point of view; in fact, he did not try.

"I'll just call up the office," he resumed, "and get the right number of your room. "What's your name?"

Mr. Heston supplied the desired information, and sat huddled up on a trunk while Mr. Clancy carried on a low-toned conversation at the telephone in the corner.

"Call the wagon," he commanded one of the porters, when at last he hung up the receiver.

Mr. Clancy regarded the blanket-wrapped figure with narrow-eyed suspicion. "So," he said, after a long scrutiny, "you poor boob, you don't even know what your name is, eh?"

"Don't know what my name is!" Mr. Heston echoed, "what do you mean? Of course I know what my name is!"

"Well," Mr. Clancy returned, there ain't no John Heston registered in this hotel."

And then Mr. Heston remembered! To avoid being interviewed upon the unpleasant subject of John Heston, Jr's, latest escapade, Fate had urged her unhappy puppet to register under an assumed name, and so, upon the hotel books, he appeared as John Williams of New York.

The arrival of two blue-coated representatives of the city's police department cut short the disjointed history of Mr. Heston's unbelievable chapter of accidents which he was endeavoring to pour into the deaf ear of the house detectve. Mr. Heston, now clad in a pair of cast-off overalls and two dilapidated brogan's, not mates, which had been donated by the engineer's department, his gaunt frame hidden by an overcoat grudgingly loaned by a waiter, (and only loaned as its owner took especial pains to impress upon all present,) his gray head concealed by the tattered ruin of a one-time derby hat, set forth for the police station.

Arrested, humiliated, stripped of his dignity, looked upon with suspicion as either drunk or demented, and all because his clothing had been stolen! The unfortunate man was thoroughly cowed.

The lieutenant behind the desk at the station house was a man of rare intelligence, at least, so he seemed to the distraught gentleman in the waiter's overcoat, for the police official readily agreed to try to reach, for purposes of identification, Mr. John Heston, Jr., before an alienist was summoned; and Mr. John Heston, Jr., the lieutenant surmised, would not be difficult to locate.

Mr. John Heston, Sr., shifted uneasily from one foot to the other for the length of time required for an officer to walk the length of a row of cells, unlock a door, and return to the desk; with the officer appeared Mr. Heston's erring son, rather crestfallen and somewhat the worse for wear.

"You know this man, Jack?" asked the lieutenant, who seemed to be on the most surprising terms of intimacy with his prisoner. "He says you can identify him."

Jack turned and surveyed the miserable individual by the desk, whom he had not before honored by so much as a glance. He started visibly, and then a broad grin slowly enveloped his features.

"No," he said, at last, shaking his head, "I don't know him; never saw him before. By Jove," he continued hastily, but with peculiar emphasis, as his father seemed to be recovering from the horrid shock, "when you sent for me I thought sure it must be my father; he's in town; Cohen, who left here not ten minutes ago, told me."

Although his conversation was addressed to the lieutenant, young Mr. Heston's gaze never left his father's face; and that face was a study in various and conflicting emotions.

Mr. Heston swallowed, moistened his lips, then swallowed once more, before he could sufficiently master his feelings to make himself understood.

"May I,—eh, may I speak with this young man in private?" he faltered.

"Go as far as you like," the lieutenant acquiesced, with a wave of his hand toward a deserted corner of the room.

Two minutes later the pair returned to the desk.

"We have come, Lieutenant," Mr. Heston, Jr., explained, "to get each other out of hock. I have found that I do know this person, after all. It was his vaudeville tramp make-up that fooled me. He's my father, and he's not off his nut, at all. Somebody nipped his clothes when he was in the bath tub, and when he chased after him, the door blew shut and he was locked out in the hall. No wonder they thought he was looney. Now, will you kindly 'phone for Cohen again, because Dad has decided to bail me out, after all; disgrace to the family, you know."

The lieutenant reached for the 'phone, and, without a word of comment, requested Central once more to connect him with the office of Mr. Cohen. Men behind city police desks are immune against surprise.

"It's never again for me, Dad, I know," Jack announced, as he and his father sat side by side on the wooden bench, awaiting the arrival of Mr. Cohen, "but, of course, if something should turn up sometime,—well, I don't suppose the folks at home could believe such a story as this, do you?"

Mr. Heston's interest seemed to center upon the two brogans whch were not mates, and he made no reply.

# Circumstantial Evidence

BY LAWRENCE H. LANDEN

*Would you send a man to his death on circumstantial evidence? This much discussed legal question with its fine distinctions, is further involved, not answered, by this story of a cold and cleverly executed murder.*

CANNOT sleep to-night, and all because of Lindlow and the story he told me. Ordinarily such things would not effect me, but my nerves are in a frightful condition, and Lindlow appears to be peculiarly qualified to upset them. I came all the way from San Francisco up to this lonely mountain resort to avoid just such persons as Lindlow. What he is doing here I cannot imagine, still less why he should single me out as the recipient of his confidences. I have not the slightest use either for the man or his mad notions. I never saw a man that I so thoroughly disapproved of. I resent his manners, his actions, his speech. I resent the cold mockery of his gray eyes, the cynical droop of his mouth. I resent his very existence.

When, to-day after lunch, he came out on the veranda, walking with that light, springy step of his, and glowing with that physical well-being which seems to be his without any conscious effort on his part, I instantly felt all my resentment mounting within me. I found time to disapprove of the newspaper that he carried, for I have myself forsworn newspapers during my stay here; and when he sat down in a rocker and, instead of quietly reading his paper, turned to me and began to speak, my irritation redoubled. I had an impulse to move away, but I did not like the idea of giving up my hammock, the veranda being the most comfortable place during the hot afternoon hours. Besides, why should I allow this man's comings and goings to interfere with my own?

He tapped the paper on his knee. "I see they hung that fellow Trevitt yesterday," he began.

I answered him with a noncommittal grunt. I decided that I would not be drawn into a conversation. But he would not be denied.

"It was purely circumstantial evidence, as I suppose you know," he said, and, as I made no reply, he led with a direct question:

"Do you believe in hanging on circumstantial evidence?"

"I don't see why not," I retorted with some brusqueness. And then, a little lamely: "That is, provided the evidence is conclusive."

"No circumstantial evidence is conclusive," he said. "Now, I do not believe that this Trevitt was guilty. To be sure, the story he told in his defence sounded impossible. But a man of Trevitt's intelligence does not tell an impossible story unless it is true. The most conclusive circumstantial evidence may prove the direct opposite to the real facts."

"You will have to prove that," I challenged, nettled by his positiveness.

"Very well. I'll tell you a little true story, if you care to listen, that ought to prove my contention."

I groaned inwardly, but I had fairly let myself in for it.

"But in order," he continued, "that you may understand the small part I played in the events that I am going to relate, I must acquaint you with some of my views. In the first place, I don't believe in this hanging business at all. It is as barbarous as it is useless. We persist in it only because we are a race of barbarians, and must needs give visible evidence of our barbarous state."

"Does that include yourself?" I could not help but ask. But he ignored the question.

"I believe, furthermore, that one murder does not necessarily make a murderer."

"Not a murderer!" I almost gasped in my astonishment.

"No. Many—most of those convicted of murder do not have the murderer's psychology. They are very much like you and me. Given the same circumstances we would probably have acted precisely as they did. They are not more culpable, only more unfortunate, than we. What, then, is to be gained by killing them? Why can't we get off our high horse of self-righteousness and conceit, and inquire a little into the causes for men's actions? Why? Because, as I said, we are a race of barbarians, and like barbarians we strike blindly, unreasoningly."

A man of unusual qualities is Lindlow, that I must admit although I dislike him. One has to listen to him whether he likes it or not. His sentences, flung out quickly in a low, even tone, give no suggestion of nervousness, but rather of a quiet energy under perfect control, and his every word goes home.

"But to my story," he went on. "In the town of my birth—where that is located or what its name is does not matter—there lived John Armstrong and his young wife. They had not been married long enough to be disillusioned, and they were happy as a pair of birds in spring. Then the other man came on the scene.

"His name was Overton—James Overton. That, at least, was what he called himself. He lived at the best hotel in town and seemed to be abundantly supplied with money. No one knew anything definite about him, who he was or whence he came; in spite of this many stories circulated about him. He had travelled extensively, seemingly all over the world. Very interesting and very romantic the unsophisticated young damsels of the town found him, and I have no doubt that he was the hero of many a day-dream.

"There is a certain type of man that seems to possess a peculiar fascination for the gentler sex, while we ordinary mortals are unable to puzzle out whereof their charms consist. James Overton was one of these; physically unattractive, even repulsive, with his bald head, florid face and bulging waist-line. And if ever the physical marks of a man gave his mental measure this was true in the case of James Overton. He was a living monument of grossness, vulgarity and egotism—a veritable pig-psychology.

"He was in the habit of riding out on horseback every day. One day as I was crossing a street he came thundering around a corner, and his horse knocked me over. It was wholly accidental—a little carelessness and lack of attention on his part as well as mine. Although badly frightened I was not seriously hurt, and when I got up he cursed me roundly for not getting out of his way. I was only sixteen years of age at that time. There is no vanity like the vanity of sixteen, and he had hurt it to the quick. Then and there I began to hate him. And, what with subsequent happenings, Overton soon took his place in my youthful imagination as the embodiment of all that was base and evil and detestable.

"Mrs. Armstrong was an enthusiastic equestrienne, and was also in the habit of taking daily rides. That's how Overton came to meet her. He found her one day three miles from town with her horse gone lame. To ride the animal back to town was out of the question, so he assisted her in finding a farmer who would take it in temporarily, whereupon she rode Overton's horse home, he walking along by her side.

"After that they went out together regularly. Armstrong, if he knew, did not suspect anything wrong. He had never met Overton, although he, like everyone in town, knew him by sight.

"My family was very intimate with the Armstrongs. I, particularly, was possessed of a youthful admiration for Mrs. Armstrong, that approached very close to worship. Therefore, when I discovered the intimacy between her and the man I hated, I did not like it. But I could not suspect my idol of anything that was not perfectly proper, consequently I was as unprepared for what happened as was everybody else. One day Overton suddenly left for parts unknown, and Mrs. Armstrong went with him."

Lindlow paused and extracted a couple of small black cigars from a pocket.

"Have a smoke. No? Very well." He returned one of the cigars to his pocket, and lit the other. His eyes roamed reflectively over the wooded slopes and canyons below us while he blew a few clouds of smoke out on the quiet air. Then he began anew:

"Armstrong went wild. For three months following his wife's disappearance he set a terrible pace, and was probably not sober for a single hour during that time.

"But time, the Master Healer, got in his work, and after three months' absence, Armstrong one morning again entered his office, perfectly sober; a little the worse for wear, perhaps, but with a healthier, or at least more practical, view of life. And when a year had passed everything was again very much as it had been before his marriage.

"Then Mrs. Armstrong returned. Not the Mrs. Armstrong we had known, but a wreck of her former self, broken in health and spirit. That beast had ruined her, and thrown her from him like a broken plaything.

"She crawled to Armstrong's feet and begged for mercy, begged him to take her back. Of course, he could not do that. But he did what he could. He provided her with a home for the rest of her days, which were not many. The poor thing died six months later.

"But Armstrong, when he first saw her after her return, swore a terrible oath: that he would not rest day or night until he had the life-blood of James Overton. And as soon as he could wind up his affairs he disappeared, never to be seen or heard of in his home-town again.

"I cannot get away from the idea that there is some intelligent force behind all things—call it God, or Fate, or what you like; there are so many evidences of design in the shaping of human destinies. And it was more than a coincidence that it should fall upon me to witness the last act of this drama.

"Twelve years had already passed since the disappearance of John Armstrong, and he was almost forgotten. I was then twenty-nine years old. It so happened that I went on a business trip to Grand Rapids during the summer, and while there I visited an old friend of my father's, a Mr. Waverly, who lived a few miles out of the city. Judge of my surprise when I found James Overton there before me. To be sure, he had changed his name—calling himself Barton Hall—and he was balder, more florid of face, and wider of girth than when I

last saw him, but in spite of this I knew him as soon as I laid eyes on him.

"Overton did not recognize me. He had seen me only once, and I had changed much since the time he knocked me over in the street and cursed me. I did not enlighten him, but I asked Mr. Waverly about him, and was told that the fellow was engaged in business in Grand Rapids. He had drifted into town some six years before, from no one knew where, and, since he had plenty of money, no one asked any questions. He had evidently been knocking about the world a great deal, said Mr. Waverly, but had tired of travel, so he had bought out a manufacturer and settled down. Mr. Waverly also informed me that he had invited the man to his place for purely business reasons.

"By avoiding Overton—or Hall—as much as possible, I managed to make my stay at Waverly's very pleasant. The Waverly house was a queer, ramshackle structure, situated on a steep slope in a very picturesque neighborhood. Originally the house had been a one-story affair, built on a terrace. In later years another wing had been added on the lower side, at right angles with the original building. This new wing had two stories, the upper floor, owing to the difference in elevation, coming on the same level as that of the old house.

"Below the house, but quite close to it, ran a small stream. A concrete dam had been built across this, collecting the water into a good-sized pond, which could be drained at pleasure. At the point where the stream emptied into the pond there was a bridge across.

"I had been at Waverly's about a week when, one day from my room, I saw a man coming across this bridge. Something familiar in his bearing brought me quickly to the window. I knew him on the instant. Although twelve merciless years had put their mark on him I had not a moment's doubt. It was John Armstrong. As I said, I had known him intimately, and I had seen him the day he swore that he would have James Overton's life-blood. I had never been able to forget the expression that was on his face at that time. And now, as he came across the bridge, I saw that same expression again, only now it had a set, fixed appearance, as if his features had been molded that way. I knew then that it had been there ever since that day of long ago,—that the thought of seeing James Overton's life-blood had been ever-present in his mind through all these years.

"I was surprised afterwards to learn that Armstrong had been in Grand Rapids for some time, and that he had become well acquainted with Overton. He had chummed with him, and outsiders had come to look on the two as great friends. But I soon saw that this was part of a well thought-out plan. Armstrong, nursing his terrible hate through twelve long years had learned patience; and once he had his prey in his clutches he could well afford to bide the most favorable opportunity for the consummation of his revenge. Remember, Overton had never known the man he had wronged, and, as Armstrong had also changed his name, Overton was entirely unaware of the sinister portent in his presence.

"As I said, Armstrong came across the bridge, and not an instant did I doubt his errand. He walked up to the main entrance and asked for Mr. Hall. A servant showed him to Overton's room, and the two men were left alone. A few minutes later a shot was heard. The servants rushed in and found Overton lying across the bed with a bullet in his heart, and Armstrong holding a smoking revolver in his hand with one chamber empty.

"Of course Armstrong was arrested.

Nobody thought he had a chance. His plea of 'not guilty' was considered a fool's plea. His claim was that a man out on the terrace had shot Overton through the open window, and that he himself had fired after the fleeing man, although he had not succeeded in hitting him. Naturally no one wanted to brand himself a fool by professing to believe such a story as that."

Here Lindlow paused again, ostensibly to relight his cigar which had gone out; in reality, I suspected, to give greater effect to the denouement. This little trick did not serve to increase my respect for the fellow; as for the story itself, it had been commonplace enough so far. But I wanted to get it over with, so I hurried him on with an impatient, "Well?"

"He was acquitted," he said curtly.

"What? On such a ridiculous story as that?"

"You," said Lindlow, "know the real facts in the case, and they have prejudiced your judgment. You must remember that the prosecutor and the public did not know the real facts, and to them Armstrong's story might well have seemed improbable at first, but not impossible. There was much evidence to show the close friendship that had existed between the two men, and nobody had ever known them to quarrel. But what carried greatest weight, and what caused the district attorney to drop the case like a hot potato was the fact that, while the revolver found in Armstrong's hand was a thirty-two calibre Smith and Wesson, the bullet that killed Overton was a forty-four. There was some puzzling over the fact that only one shot had been heard, but it was easily shown that a shot fired from the terrace could be heard only very faintly in that part of the house which was occupied at the time, and might easily have escaped notice altogether when no one was listening for it; while on the other hand a shot fired inside the room could be heard very plainly all through the house."

"I presume," said I, "that you were summoned as a witness?"

"Yes. And my appearance almost resulted disastrously for Armstrong, although through no fault of mine. When I gave my name and address he half rose from his seat, and stared at me with mouth agape. A nice pickle it would have made, had it become known that the defendant had an old score to settle with the murdered man. I, however, gave him a cold stare, and he evidently concluded that I had not recognized him."

"What was your testimony, if I may ask?"

"That I had been taking an afternoon nap on my bed, and had heard and seen nothing."

"You swore to that?"

He shrugged his shoulders. There was a short silence.

"Well," said I, "you said you would prove—certain things, you know, and you have proven nothing. All you have shown is that your—er—friend, John Armstrong, was freed from a charge of murder by circumstantial evidence."

"Exactly. And very conclusive evidence, was it not? Very good. And now I want to tell you, that Armstrong *did* kill Overton, and *I saw it.*"

"You saw it!"

"So I did. My room was in the second story of the new wing that I spoke of. Overton's room was in the old part of the house, and had a large window near the angle formed by the conjunction of the two walls. When the shades were up I could see almost every detail in his room from my window.

"When I saw Armstrong coming I looked over, and saw that Overton was in his room. Instantly I pulled down my window-shade, but I took care to

leave the back of a chair between the shade and the window casing. Through the opening thus produced I had an unobstructed view of the other window, while I could sit well back in my darkened room without being observed.

"I saw Armstrong as he entered Overton's room and closed the door behind him. I saw Overton greet his guest effusively, although I could not hear what was being said. Armstrong seemed preoccupied. He came over to the window and looked out. He glanced at the pond, then gazed at my window long and intently.

"His eyes followed the terrace, then roamed along the shores of the pond and the creek. It was a rather cold day for summer, threatening rain, and no one was about.

"Once more he looked at my window, and, apparently satisfied, turned about and stood with his back against the pane. He spoke a few words, and I saw Overton pull himself up with a start. His usual floridness slowly faded, and a sickly, greenish hue took its place. He stood up unsteadily, and his eyes flew about the room as if measuring the chances of escape. Armstrong's hand went to his pocket, and came back holding a large Colt revolver, with which he covered his victim. Then followed a scene, the like of which I hope never to see again: a miserable wretch begging for his worthless life; pleading and making offers in such agony of fear as only such cowardly scoundrels may know at the imminence of death. What Armstrong said I could not hear, but I could sense it: the outpouring of that intense hatred and murder-lust that had brooded and festered and grown in his brain for twelve long years of unceasing, unrelenting search for the elusive quarry, until it had become an all-absorbing passion, mastering his life and threatening his reason.

"Then all of a sudden I saw Overton crumple up, collapsing on the bed. I was surprised, for I had heard no report. I was still wondering when Armstrong, after watching the silent form of his enemy for a moment, turned very deliberately and opened the window. But in the fraction of a second that he hesitated before he sent the pistol flying through the air to splash into the pond below, I saw and understood: there was a Maxim silencer attached to the muzzle of the revolver.

"Next Armstrong pulled out the Smith and Wesson, and, standing well back in the room, fired a shot out through the open window. This it was that gave the alarm. He never tried to escape. Having thrown away the only evidence against him, he could remain without fear to play the role of the unjustly accused. And this he did successfully, only losing his composure once,—the time he recognized me in the court-room.

"You see the ingeniousness of his plan? The use of the Maxim silencer gave him plenty of time. Had he desired he could have gone away quietly, and might have put considerable distance between himself and the scene of his deed before its discovery. But such a course would inevitably have branded him as the perpetrator, whereas, by indulging in a little stage-play, he succeeded in effectively turning suspicion from himself. I leave it to you—it would have been a shame for me to spoil a plot like that."

"Undoubtedly," said I coldly. "But in a society governed by law and order, and not by brute force—"

"'Law and order'!" he jeered. "Would justice have been served by the hanging of John Armstrong? That is the question. The world lost nothing with James Overton. And if Armstrong lived to be a thousand years old he would never commit another murder.

What good would it have done, then, to hang him?"

"Are you aware," said I, "that what you have just told me might result in rather disagreeable consequences for you?"

"No," he said, as he arose to go. "You can prove nothing. Perhaps, after all, I did sleep, as I swore in court, and neither heard nor saw anything. Perhaps what I have just told you is simply a phantasy—an explanation that I have worked out in my own mind. You see, the pond below the house has been drained several times, and the Colt forty-four has never been found."

"And no wonder," I sneered. "You knew where it was, and fished it out at your first opportunity."

His only answer was a mocking laugh as he went down the steps, and disappeared, walking briskly, among the trees.

# The Lady and the Beast

BY J. L. SHERARD

*In modern settings a young gallant saves his lady fair from an escaped tiger and what maiden could resist such a suitor even though—but she didn't know it!*

BURNEY was tired, disheartened and disgusted. The sixty days of his professional life had panned out no more productive of dollars than an orange tree of golden fruit within the Arctic circle.

Moreover, Mr. Leighton had offered him a fresh insult that very morning, and the possibility of seeing Julia again seemed more remote than ever.

Yielding to a sudden impulse of protest, he stopped reading and hurled the volume on pleading and practice to the floor, twisting and damaging its cover of buckram. He gazed at the wreck abstractedly for a moment, then picked it up, repentant, brushed off the dust with his handkerchief and restored it to its proper place in the book-case.

"It's like traveling across an interminable desert under a parching sun," he growled, pacing back and forth, moodily. "No income, and dry—ye gods! It makes me thirsty to look at a law book. I'm fast acquiring the feeling of an Egyptian mummy transplanted to the banks of the East river. Adventure, romance—not to mention the important item of tens and twenties—they seem to have no standing in this dry-as-dust calling, and, if this thing doesn't end at once, I'm going to quit and join the strike-breakers' union."

Thus he railed sincerely at the law, but his thoughts were mostly of the girl.

Some one knocked sharply at the door. Burney's lips tightened in an expression of real distress. "A bill collector," he muttered, "and the bank busted!"

The visitor, a short, stocky man who was out of breath from his haste in climbing the flight of steps, seemed greatly excited.

"Dose show people have ruint me—ruint me!" he began hysterically, resting his hands on the flat top desk for support. "Oh, my poor gyarden, my fence, my asparagus—all ruint! Robbers gone—no pay—an' now de poorhouse is reachin' its hand for me. It was my livin'. Meester Burney, you can help me—you can—"

Burney made him sit down and tell his story calmly and coherently. He soon learned from the old man that the Great Renowned Smith Shows, after a lean week's engagement, had just broken camp preparatory to their assault upon the next town. A careless driver had bumped his heavy wagon against the frail fence enclosing old Becker's garden, snapping the rotten posts and causing the wreck to fall upon his tender truck. Once down, the hurrying force of movers, cramped for space in which to turn their wagons, overran asparagus, peas, strawberries, and all the healthy and succulent young things the old gardner relied upon for his hard living.

The manager of the shows refused to pay damages. Baffled in his friendly efforts at redress, Becker was desperate.

That was the case of Burney's client.

Rockton was a small manufacturing town lying within two miles of the state line. The next village was just over the border, and the Smith aggregation, practising every possible economy, had concluded that it would be cheaper to move their baggage and animals by the drayage route than to use the railroad. In an hour perhaps, all their property would be in another state, as safely out of the jurisdiction of the court as if it were a thousand miles away.

Burney's heart bounded with the joy of the undefeated. This was action, indeed, the rattling of the law's dry bones. "Come!" he commanded, and started out at a lively clip. The old man quickened his pace into a brisk run to keep up with his patron.

Armed with a warrant of attachment, issued by a magistrate who never varied from his slow and provoking routine no matter how urgent the case, Joe Hale, the sheriff, was dispatched in hot pursuit to serve the writ before the drivers could whip their teams across the fatal state line.

When he overtook the moving rearguard of the Great Renowned, the procession, with the exception of two wagons, was winding along the sinuous road safe in the land of refuge. It was a land of refuge in more than the ordinary sense, for the two distinguished governors were at daggers' points, and exchanged courtesies by declining to honor each other's requisitions.

Hale allowed the wagon loaded with tent poles to pass unmolested into foreign territory, but the last in the long line he stopped peremptorily. It conveyed a canvas-covered cage and suggested possibilities of value.

"Turn right around and drive back to town," Hale commanded. "We won't do nothin' to Jim's team, of course, but we want that cargo on it delivered into our hands forthwith. Old Smith must be a bloodthirsty pirate—the kind that delights to skin widows and orphans."

Smith, the manager, under whose name the aggregation displayed "the greatest show on earth," was somewhere ahead, perhaps in the town of his destination, and he did not learn of the ill luck that had befallen one of his attractions until the tardy arrival of the man who formed the listless tail of the procession.

It was a legal proceeding out of the ordinary, and Hale rose grandly to the dignity and the importance the occasion demanded. He summoned a posse, who took hold of the cage very gingerly and carried it into the sheriff's office, where they carefully deposited it upon the long table in the middle of the room.

"What's in it?" blustered Hale. "Betcher it's that funny bunch of monkeys, or a gyascutus, or maybe the sacred cow. Some bloomin' harmless varmint, you c'n depend. That's my usual luck. Come, boys, let's see the show!"

Burney remonstrated that it would be best not to interfere with the property. Whatever the cage contained, it was in the sheriff's possession and should be held undisturbed until the proprietor of the shows arrived and Becker's claim satisfied.

But the sheriff's curiosity was aroused hopelessly. Urged on by the good-natured chaffing of his friends, he was determined to see inside. Burney entertained the same secret desire, but outwardly he protested that it would be best to wait until Smith appeared.

The sheriff, calmly ignoring the advice, unfastened the canvas and slipped it off the cage.

"What'd I tell you?" he spoke in disgust, stepping back and pointing an accusing finger at the freshly painted figure of a mountain antelope. "Gimme the axe. Let the critter git out."

Again Burney protested. "It will only serve to damage Mr. Smith's property, for which you will be liable," he argued. "What's the use of it?"

"Don't bother me," the sheriff retorted good-humoredly. "I'm not goin' to hurt anything. I want to see the animal at close range. P'haps I'll buy him for the town zoo."

With the aid of an axe, Hale began prying open the lock with a zeal worthy of a better cause. In the stubborn work of forcing it, he lost his patience. To add to his provocation, he struck his thumb a painful blow, and maddened by the taunts of the few onlookers in the office, unwisely he battered the side of the cage with staggering momentum. There was the crash of steel on steel, and the axe had to be wrenched loose from the opening it made in the wood and iron work.

Under the repeated hammering, jarring and pushing, the cage had crept unnoticed, inch by inch, nearer the edge of the table. When Hale pried the axe free, the cage lurched suddenly with the rebound, and, before those present could realize what was happening, it tumbled heavily on the floor, landing upside down.

The sheriff's blow had struck a fatally weak place on the lock, breaking clean the hasp.

The animal within, enraged and frantic, plunged with all its brute strength against the iron bars. There was a desperate straining, the sudden snap of steel, and a quivering tiger, long, lean and threatening, leaped into the open!

It was the great "untamed"—the scourge of the jungle!

The men in the office, stricken with panic, beat a hasty retreat—all but Hale, Burney and the deputy. Hale jerked at his holster, then remembered, with a sickening tug at his heart, that he had laid his pistol aside with his coat when he took up the axe in his energetic way to explore the hidden mystery of the cage. He cursed himself for his indiscretion. The deputy drew his gun and fired excitedly, missing his mark by a couple of feet. Burney sprang forward, knocked his arm up, and the second bullet went into the ceiling.

All this happened in an instant. The tiger, dazed and frantic, was impelled just then more by an instinct of safety than one of revenge. It leaped upon the table, crouched down with muscles tense and tail swishing from side to side, and sprang through the open window to the street below.

A wild pony, unbridled and unrestrained, can create a respectable panic on the streets, but for the genuine article, done to the accompaniment of flying skirts and the scampering of brave feet, one tiger is as good as a jungle of wild beasts.

The animal sniffed suspiciously at this strange taste of liberty, then scurried from point to point around the courthouse square, at an utter loss apparently, as to the proper etiquette to follow. The people—when they dared—looked out from their places of safety behind bolted doors, dumb, frightened, waiting.

From the window of the sheriff's office Burney coaxed and teased the lean giant, feeling that a chance effort at subjection was better than none at all; but, if there came any result from this jargon, it was to drive the tiger in the opposite direction.

In front of the bank the animal stood uncertainly for a moment. Then, with the suddenness and force of an arrow, it sprang through the plate-glass window, tearing a great hole in it and leaving a shower of falling glass in its wake.

This swift change of scene Burney saw from the window. Help, instant and effective, was needed to save those at work in the bank.

The young lawyer swung himself lightly to the ground and rushed across the square. He pushed the bank door open and went in. A glance revealed the dangerous situation. The cashier was in hiding under a table, the clerk, the teller and the bookkeeper, crouched in corners or behind the shelter of adding machine or piles of ledgers.

But the bank's president, Mr. Leighton, stood directly in front of the tiger, seemingly hypnotized and unable to escape.

Burney's entrance caused the beast to turn its head slightly, and in that fleeting moment of hope Leighton came to his senses sufficiently to break the tragic tableau. He was standing just in front of the door leading into the vault. Quickly he darted into this haven of safety and caught at the massive iron door to swing it into position behind him.

But the tiger was too quick for him. It plunged through the narrowing space, striking the president a sideling glance and hurling him against the far wall of the vault.

Burney, already inside the railing and feeling no concern about his own safety, ran into the vault and dragged Mr. Leighton out. Then he turned quickly to close the inner door, slamming it shut as the tiger lunged heavily against it. But in that brief interval the teller, beside himself with fear, threw his weight against the outer door, and it swung ponderously into place with a click.

Here was a nerve-racking position, indeed. Those on the outside immediately became sensible of what they conceived to be Burney's perilous situation. Locked in a dark vault with a savage tiger—what other outcome could there be but death, swift and horrible?

And yet no one had the courage or the presence of mind to attempt to open the door. The sheriff entered, and a hasty conference was held. But before it was over and a definite decision had been reached, Smith and his trainer, excited and panting for breath, rushed into the lobby. The situation was hurriedly explained to them, and at their impatient request the cashier applied himself nervously to the task of turning on the combination.

The trainer, alive to the advertising value of his position, went in boldly, closed the door behind him and turned on the electric light.

The door opened. Burney came out with a smile—the smile was on his face and not on the tiger's—and stepped into the congratulatory arms of Mr. Leighton.

The old gentleman patted him affectionately on the back, and, drawing him aside, whispered something in his ear. Burney seemed immensely pleased, for he replied with a hearty handshake.

Smith and his trainer got the tiger back into its cage without serious difficulty, paid Becker his claim for damages, cursed the rashness of the sheriff, and went their way rejoicing across the state line.

But before his departure, the proprietor of the "Great Renowned" got a chance to draw Burney aside for a private talk.

"For the love o' Mike, my boy, don't give me away," begged the man of the show. "That tiger is as harmless as a lamb. You can play the Nero stunt to the queen's taste, and nobody will be the wiser because of it. Is it a trade?"

"It is!" agreed Burney emphatically, shaking his new friend's hand warmly. "But, to satisfy my curiosity, tell me one thing before you go. How did you happen to put the tiger into the antelope's cage?"

Smith laughed. "The antelope died

just before we came here, and we were using it temporarily until the tiger's old cage could be repaired."

That evening Burney sat in the Leighton parlor the first time for many months, talking to Julia. He had been engaged to the girl for some time, but her father had interposed his objections in a most strenuous manner and refused absolutely to allow the presuming young fellow to come to his house.

"Oh, I was never in any real danger in the vault," Burney was explaining to her for the ninth time. "It felt a little creepy, I admit, standing there in the dark, but the inner door was safely locked between me and the tiger and the outer simply stood between me and fresh air. And, thanks to the silence of the trainer, your father and all the rest of them thought I was exposed to the beast all the time and came out like a second Daniel. But I get the honor and the glory and—the reward. That's what counts. I am satisfied."

And the girl in her happiness made him tell it all over again!

The next morning in his office, after dismissing two substantial clients, he picked up the volume on pleading and practice and began reading under the sub-title "Attachment."

"It's all a question of luck and temperament," he commented, for between the lines the dry-as-dust text was alive with romance and adventure and—love!

# Playing It Straight

BY J. BRANT

*There is a lot of cynicism in the fortune-telling business and a lot of human nature, too, as this story of two prospectors who "played" a seer's advice, proves.*

HIRTY years ago Old Old Man Davis went alone up into the Black Range from Fairview, crossed the Divide at Hoyt Creek with his prospector's kit, and stayed a month with the bears and blacktail bucks and Apaches among the canyons which form the head of the Gila.

When he returned his pack and pockets bulged with nuggets of solid gold, yellow and pure and heavy.

Old Man Davis then proceeded to go on a "bust" which lasted two weeks and spread from Chloride on one side of Fairview to Fluorine on the other. Big times were common at the camps in those days, but the bust of Old Man Davis beat them all. The supply of nuggets ran out just ahead of the supply of rum, and Old Man Davis sobered up.

Bad whiskey has let out many secrets, but it did not let out the location of the new mine. Old Man Davis was in his seventies and was on his guard drunk or sober. He talked at length and loudly of the richness of his find, and of the gold he had taken out and hidden because of his inability to pack it in; but of the hiding place he said not a word.

Nevertheless fifty hopeful men had taken up the trail before the end of the spree. Old Man Davis grinned when he heard it, and waited patiently in Fairview. And by ones and twos the fifty came back, disappointed.

Then Old Man Davis started out alone. He had no partner, and made it plain by repeated refusals that he wanted none. He was secretly followed, and he knew he would be. But he was a fox and threw them off. They all returned at last and were made much sport of, after the customary treatment of unsuccessful sleuths.

Old Man Davis had promised to be back within a week with another load of gold. But the week passed, and another, and another, and he did not return. People began to get anxious—not for the safety of Old Man Davis, but the safety of the gold he was bringing.

Then one day he came crawling in nearly starved, and so weak he could scarcely drag himself along. And not an ounce of gold did he bring with him.

At last they got the story out of him, though it was hard work for he was ashamed. So carefully had he concealed his trail that in three weeks of constant search he had not been able to get back to his mines.

A week later he tried again, and came back more discouraged than before. On the third attempt he asked for help, and half the population of the three camps went with him. They found nothing.

Many times after that did Old Man Davis seek his lost mine, taking with him those who would go, going alone if none would follow. His disappointment was affecting his mind, and he mumbled often to himself, always about his lost diggings. People paid less and less at-

tention to him, though they treated him with respect because of the memory of the Big Bust.

One morning they found him dead in his cabin. There was a smile on his face,—a smile that made one think that at last he had found his lost claim. He was buried on the hillside with scant ceremony; at that time and place it was not considered fashionable to die peacefully in one's bed.

All that he left was a deep and lasting curiosity as to the location of the lost Davis Diggings—excellent material for clairvoyants and the like.

Mademoiselle Zona, whose real name was Maggie Devine, looked long and carefully through the peek-hole in the curtain at the stranger who had just entered the Zona Fortune Telling Parlors.

"You read him, Nora," she whispered at last to her sister, "and see what you can make out of him. He looks to me like a cross between a cattleman and a farmer. I'm going to take another look at his hat."

Nora Devine took her turn at the peek-hole. She was fully as important to the establishment as her sister, for she was the person behind the strings. But her customers never saw her, never knew of her existence, so she never had to change her name from plain Nora Devine.

In a minute Mademoiselle Zona returned.

"It's a real hat all right," she whispered, "so he ain't a farmer. Must be a cattleman."

"Cattleman nothing! Look at those hands, and the size of his feet. You sure are getting stale from overwork, Maggie. That guy ain't either a cattleman or a farmer, though I'm not so sure as to his not being a cross between. He's a miner."

Mademoiselle Zona took another look to satisfy herself as to the correctness of this diagnosis, and then hurried after her sister to the back room to consult the mining news in the files of daily papers.

"Can't be he's from the North. He's not as red as that feller from Alaska last week—more real tan. Maybe he's from Mexico. Here's a director's meeting for a bankrupt mine in the Black Range. James M. Reed is it or I'm a turkey. J. M. R. is in his hat. Look up Black Range, Maggie."

It was a chance, but if you are going to make a reputation at fortune telling you have got to take chances.

Maggie looked under the B's in a scrap-book full of newspaper clippings, and hastily ran through a reporter's story of the lost Davis Diggings.

Dressed like an Egyptian princess Mademoiselle Zona floated into the presence of the impatient and somewhat skeptical Jimmy Reed, for he it was, and proceeded to fade into a trance. She told him his right name and his business and where he came from, and his skepticism vanished. The rest was easy.

Mademoiselle Zona had had much experience with prospectors and knew that there was but one thing that brought them to her. An ordinary man might come for a hundred reasons, with love affairs predominating. But given a mining man, and invariably he came to find out just where to sink his pick to turn up ore. It was a lead pipe cinch, no guess work about it.

"Of course she was on the square," confided Jimmy later to his partner, Hobe Sperry. "Didn't she tell me my real name and my age and weight and horrible past while she was fainted in that chair? All the time her soul was communing with angels. How could she have faked when she never saw me before and nobody knew I was coming? And then her wandering spirit

ran on to Old Man Davis, who it seems had been hankering to get into communication with me for some time. Davis said he'd been watching me because he knew I'd been thinking a lot about his lost diggings lately on account of my bad luck, and that I'd sort of looked for 'em every time I crossed to the other side. Ain't that so?"

"Yes," admitted Hobe, "that's so."

"Well, it seems Davis has done a lot of considering since he's been dead, and he's got his location all figured out. He took this occasion to pass his secret on to me because of my good looks. It's pretty near the top of the divide, and though he didn't mention any names, it's at the head of one of those canyons south of Dry Diamond. When we get over there I can put my hand right on it, for he described it plain as pyrites, and there ain't any other spot like it in the whole range. We ought to make it in three days easy from Chloride, and we'll start to-morrow."

"We might as well try," consented Hobe, "though I ain't any too hopeful. That's the same kind of talk Old Man Davis kept handing out when he was living, and unless he's changed a lot since he's been dead he's apt to be awful unreliable."

Mademoiselle Zona and invisible sister Nora had started something.

Three months later Mademoiselle Zona observed through the peek-hole the honest features, the hard hands, and the big feet of Jimmy Reed. And because it was her business to remember such things she remembered him.

"It's that Black Range feller again," she whispered to Nora. "I knew he'd come back after the way we hooked him. They always do if you tell them what they're after and don't make any bad mistakes. I'll go in and give him a new set of directions for his lost mine. And I'll bet I'll be handing him messages from Old Man Davis as long as we're in the business."

"He looks prosperous," commented the practical Nora. "I think he could stand our extra confidential rates."

But Jimmy Reed had not come to hear the latest news from the departed Mr. Davis.

"How-de-do, Miss Zona," he said when she entered. "No, I don't want any future read, not to-day. I've come to settle a little account that me and Hobe Sperry reckon is due you. Those directions that Mr. Davis gave me when I was here last sure caused us a lot of trouble, but in the end we found his mine."

Mademoiselle Zona was accustomed to surprises in her business, but she could not suppress an exclamation of astonishment.

"Yes, we found his diggings," continued Jimmy. "You may not have understood what it was you was telling me that time, you being sort of faint that way. Mr. Davis gave me an idea where his lost claim was located through your spirit, and Hobe and I set out to find it.

"It was a pretty tough country that Mr. Davis made us travel, and lots of times we got mighty discouraged. The sides of some of those canyons was only fit for flys to crawl up. Hobe didn't know you like I did, and used to try to make out you were a fake; his horse fell on his foot, and he suffered so at times he didn't know what he was saying. But I knew you were honest from the first, and the more I thought of you the more I was sure of it. And I did a heap of thinking. I'd see you twenty times a day just as you looked in that chair when you gave me those directions from Mr. Davis. So I knew they were true and kept up and kept Hobe going.

"We hunted about twenty days, going through every canyon mighty careful,

from its head five miles down to make sure we wouldn't pass it over. And just as I was about giving out myself and figuring how I'd come back here and have another talk with Mr. Davis before I tried again, to make sure I'd remembered the directions he'd told me, we stumbled right on the old mine.

"There ain't much else to tell. We made sure it was rich and came in as fast as we could. We got back just in time, for Hobe's leg was mighty bad. He'd got it poisoned some way and was in bed two months.

"A big company made us a fair offer for our claim, and we came back asking twice as much, never thinking they'd take us up. But they did, and paid in cash. And they'll make a good thing out of it,—but what do we care, as long as we've got enough.

"Now I don't know much about women, never having had many dealings with them. But I knew you were honest the minute you came into this room. And so I've come back to make you a little present, which ain't no more than you deserve."

Jimmy Reed handed a slip of paper to Mademoiselle Zona. It was a check for ten thousand dollars.

Maggie Devine shut her eyes, and opened them again to look at the check. Ten thousand dollars! It was enough to gratify every longing of her life. And it was given to her because she was honest!

For a time she sat looking steadily at the check, thinking. Then she slowly handed it back to Jimmy Reed.

"Thank you, Mr. Reed," she said, "but I can't take this money."

"Of course you can," protested Jimmy. "It's your share. Why not?"

"Because I'm not honest. Because I lied to you when you first came, and have been lying most of my life. I can't tell the future any more than you can. I got your name from a newspaper and had the story of the Davis Diggings in a scrap-book. My name isn't Mademoiselle Zona, it's Maggie Devine. And I lied to you hoping that you would believe me and would come back and pay for more lies. It was just luck and perseverance that made you find the mine. And I can't take it when you think you are giving it to me because I'm honest."

Maggie Devine hurried through the speech and finished in a torrent of words. She knew Nora was listening behind the curtain—could almost hear her angry breathing.

Gradually the meaning of the confession sank into the slow mind of Jimmy Reed. He had been fooled, laughed at and lied to by this trembling little woman who was too honest to take his money.

He looked at her long and earnestly, as if she were some strange animal. Her eyes never wavered from his.

Then Jimmy Reed took the check and tore it,—tore it into many pieces and put the pieces in his pocket. From another pocket he took a check-book, and crossed over to the little desk and wrote.

The new check was made out to Maggie Devine, and was for twenty thousand dollars. He got up and left it on the desk. Maggie noticed that he limped.

"It's yours," he said. "Take it and cut out this business. It's enough for a start, and you can let me know how you are getting on. I lied to you too,—it was my foot that was hurt, not Hobe's, and I was the one who doubted you. Yes, doubted you and cursed you a good many times, up there in the hills. Hobe, who had never seen you, was the one who was sure. And we cleaned up eighty thousand apiece because—because you lied."

Jimmy Reed limped out of the room and they heard the front door close behind him.

It was Nora who dashed to the desk and pounced on the check.

"Splendid!" she cried. "You're wonderful, Maggie! I didn't think it was in you. But you took an awful chance. I'd never thought of trying the honesty game, and yet it was plain as could be that he was just the kind of man who would fall for it. And I thought your mind was getting stale from overwork! What's the matter with you now? Why, you silly little goose!"

Maggie was crying.

# When Man Meets Man

BY FORD WALSH

*With death in his eyes and his back to the wall a failure makes a last bid "for money for home" by holding up a fast train. Cornered in the mountains, and dying, he learns his last fling at Fate did not fail.*

I FIRST got the news from Jud Singer, the night operator in the little lonesome station at Golden Pass. I was Jud's nearest neighbor, and for several months past I had been doing the night "trick" at the still more solitary station of Leon, twenty miles farther up the canyon. We were a lonesome pair, in spite of that twenty miles of wire between us, for within fifty miles around there was nothing to divert us except mountain sides and canyon, the click of our instrument key, and the usual freights, locals, and Overland Limited.

But I didn't get the news by wire. I had been discharged and replaced that very morning, not without cause, but as I am naturally of a social disposition, the wonder to me is not that I occasionally indulged in John Barleycorn, but rather that I didn't imbibe a good deal oftener; there was nothing else to do when the wind came howling down the pass on those long, lonesome nights. Anyway, that's the way I felt about it, though of course our general manager couldn't afford to see it that way.

I had walked all of the twenty miles down the track through the canyon to Golden Pass, and as it was ten at night by the time I got there, I was naturally tired and hungry. I made at once for the station, but as I put my head in the door, Jud didn't seem to recognize me, for his hand went like a flash to his hip, and before I could protest, he had whipped out his gun and had me covered.

"Hold on a minute, Jud, better see who's here!" I gasped, not knowing what he meant, and wondering why he appeared so excited. At the sound of my voice he lowered the weapon, scrutinized me closely, and without a word returned to his key. I could tell by his clicks of the Morse code that he was talking with the head of the division. His nerves seemed tense and on edge.

"Jud," I interrupted, after waiting for a word from him until my patience was exhausted, "I've been fired."

"I've heard about it," he responded, without looking around, "but I suppose it's your own fault."

"A lot of good that will do me," I retorted quickly. "I suppose you know the general manager won't give me a pass East, not even as far as Pueblo."

"Yes, yes," he nodded, "but this is no time to be howling about such trifles."

"Go to the devil!" I retorted angrily, starting for the door.

"Wait, don't be a fool; there's trouble up the line near your station."

"What, a wreck!" I gasped.

"No; I thought you knew; number 37 has been held up, not more than an hour ago, and the whole division is all worked up about it. One man did it, looked like a dirty little Mexican, so Saunders your successor, reports, and he cleaned the passengers out to the tune of about two thousand. He got away as slick as

a whistle, swallowed up in the dark, and that's all there is to it."

"Sounds natural, Jud; those greasers have no sense, and they'll tackle anything. Any reward offered?" I asked.

"Rather soon, ain't it?"

"It might be for some people. But say, Jud, I've got to get as far as Pueblo or Denver; there's no use of my sticking around here. They'll never take me on again, and worst of all, I'm broke."

"Where's your pay check?"

"Where can I cash it?"

Before he could answer, the key started to click. The head of the division was calling. I listened intently, with my trained ear alert, catching the message before it was finished.

*"Five hundred dollars reward dead or alive."*

I leaped to my feet so quick that Jud was startled.

"Here," I said, all excited, "let's make an exchange; you take my gun and I'll take yours."

"What for, you loon?" he asked, thoroughly puzzled.

"It ought to be clear; yours is a Colt's .45 and a harder hitter; mine's only a .38."

"What's that got to do with anything?"

"Can't you understand, you rummy, that I'm going to try to do myself a little service? I'm going after this desperado now, while the thing's fresh, and if I ever get him I can tell the general manager and all the rest to go straight to the devil." He handed over his gun, and I handed him mine without a word, and started for the door.

"Better wait until morning," he called after me.

"A man out of a job can't be keeping banker's hours," I retorted bitterly. I had a sort of nervous gnawing in the pit of my stomach, but I tightened my belt, and plunging into the darkness I turned back up the canyon over the route I had covered that day.

What happened that night and the following day is not worthy of record. I stopped just long enough at Leon to have a few minutes' talk with the new operator who had taken my place. He pointed out to me that there was just one trail that the desperado could have taken in order to stand any chance of getting away, and that was by way of the gulch which led away from Leon to the north. I agreed with him, and started without any delay, determined that if I got on the right trail I would stick to it until death finished either the desperado or me. But hunting down a human being under any circumstances is a rather sickening business. There may be those who can start on a man hunt just as lightly as they would go after a rabbit, and stick to the trail with a determination they would not exercise if in pursuit of elk or a mountain lion, risking dangers and undergoing hardships, all for the sake of bringing to earth some poor unfortunate devil, who, but for the grace of destiny, might be either you or me. It was the reward that got me into this solitary chase that I'm going to tell you about, and I say it's a sickening business at the best, for I ought to know.

It was the second day, when clambering over the top of a mountain trail, fagged out and cursing my luck, that I caught a glimpse of a human figure ahead. He was beyond hailing distance, as a narrow valley with rough rocks and a small stream lay between us, but he was not so far away but what I could see that he was either fagged or injured, for in ascending the trail on that side of the mountain he was half the time on his hands and knees, then up again, and seemingly making better time than I was making, and then down and

crawling again. The sight sent a thrill through me; the five hundred dollars at that instant seemed bigger than a gold mine, and if he had been within range of my gun I would have picked him off without so much as saying "Hello."

I took a hitch in my belt, and with the keenness of a hound urged on my tired limbs. I didn't let up for an instant, kept hard at it until darkness closed in between us, and yet, in spite of his apparent weakened condition, I didn't seem to gain an inch. There was no use of keeping on after dark, though I would have gladly done so if it hadn't been for the risk of my passing by him without my knowing it. So like the night before, I stretched myself out, unsheltered, by the edge of the trail. That was hardship, but that rotten, cursed, filthy money was constantly before my eyes, and I would have stopped short of nothing but murder to get it.

On the third day I was up at the first streak of dawn. I felt chilled to the marrow, and it took some tall walking to get the stiffness out of my joints. I followed the trail for an hour or more, but could find no trace of the fugitive ahead. At the gait I was going I should have caught sight of him by then, and all at once it struck me that he might have left the trail and tried to cut across the mountain to the main line of the Midland just beyond the range. There was only one place where he could have done this, and that was where a small ravine led up to a high ledge just about a half hour's tramp down the trail behind me. I turned back after a moment's reflection, running and scrambling at the risk of breaking my neck.

Arrived at the ravine, I was startled by a cough overhead and to my left. He couldn't have known I was near, or else he was unable to suppress it, but in either case the cough located him. Half way up the almost perpendicular ledge, some fifty feet above me, was the pitiful figure of a man half hanging, half climbing up the ragged rock, a feat that seemed impossible even to me. I had him, and no mistake. I could have picked him off with the first shot; he stood no chance at all. I called to him, and as he turned to look he almost fell. I stepped back some paces from the base of the sloping rock, so as to get a better range on him. But instead of stopping at the sound of my voice, he only made a greater effort to clamber up the faster. I didn't feel called upon to risk my neck in going after him, and just to show him that I meant business I called again and told him to come down. He continued upward, paying no attention to me whatever. Then I did what most of us would do, but I didn't want to hit him, I only tried to see how close I could come without striking his carcass. As the report of my gun broke the silence, I could see a small cloud of dust come out of the rock just above his shoulder, and a small fragment came tumbling down. Of course that settled it, and in every inch of his slow descent I could see that five hundred dollars coming to my hands inch by inch.

When he was ten feet from the ground his foot slipped, and he almost struck me as he fell. As I jumped to where he lay he turned his eyes on me for the first time. Great big wide-open eyes that reminded me of a hunted hare. He was pale as a sickly girl, and now that his sombrero had fallen off I could see that he was not a Mexican at all. His clothes proclaimed poverty, and his small insignificant figure wouldn't have scared a flea. He didn't say a word, but started to cough. Such a cough I never heard before or since. Then, before I could say anything, I saw that blood was on his lip, and as he coughed, more came.

"My God!" I exclaimed, a world of sudden pity rising from my heart, "did my shot get you?"

He shook his head and tried to smile. The smile scared me; it was like the smile of a death's head, and it took no tall figuring to tell that death was written on his face. I stooped down and then, just as easy as if he had been a babe, set him, half reclining, up against the base of the rock.

"What can I do for you?" I asked, not knowing which way to turn. He mumbled something,—only a whisper. I leaned over him.

"Here it is," he gasped faintly, trying to reach the pocket of his coat. Then I did the one thing I feel most ashamed of. With a strange sensation of guilt, I searched the pocket and drew forth a great wad of bills. I was too ashamed to count them before him, his eyes, some way, had such an accusing look, but the amount proved to be the one I had started after. Then he keeled over, frightening me like a man that is haunted, and I stood away until I saw that he was still breathing. There was nothing that I could give him, and then I thought of water. Like a startled deer I started on the run down the trail, but it was some time before I struck a small stream which came gurgling down the mountain side. With my hat filled to the brim I ran panting back up the trail, afraid I would be too late.

When I finally reached him and bent over him, I thanked my stars that he was still breathing, while only a little time before I wouldn't have hesitated to plug him full of lead. It's all a matter of knowing who you're dealing with. After I had moistened his lips he was able to drink of the water, and at the end of half an hour could sit up. All the time I was working over him, I was thinking and puzzling my brain, wondering why a puny little cuss like him had tackled such a desperate job a few nights before. Then he started to talk, but it was only between gasps and whispers that I got his story.

He had been in the West two years, kicked around and buffeted like a worthless mongrel. On account of ill-health he had been unable to hold any kind of a job, and oftentimes when he had a little money it had been difficult to obtain food and shelter; many people didn't want him around on account of his cough. Any fool could see that he was a "lunger." He had come from a little town back in New York state, where he had worked as a clerk up to the very last day he had come West. He had saved nothing, and the worst part of it was that he had a wife and two children, of three and five years, depending on him. He had done what he could, but when, a week before, his wife had written that she and the kids often went days without food, he just naturally grew desperate, and decided to get money at any cost. He held up the train, and made a neat job of it. He might have lived, I can't say as to that, but the chase I gave him would have been hard on any man; it was hard on me, and I felt it for many days after. Well, that's about all there is to it, so far as I'm concerned. As he sat there pale and panting for breath, I knew his time had come.

"Don't worry, kid," I said, as he turned those big eyes of his on me, "I'll see that the little woman gets enough to tide her along—"

"You don't mean to say—" he didn't finish, but he was looking at me wildly, with doubt in his eyes.

"Why not? There's a reward of five hundred put up for you, my boy, and I guess she can use it better than me."

His eyes shone for an instant with a new light, and fumbling in his pocket, he

drew forth a worn scrap of paper. "If you feel that way, here's her address," he whispered hoarsely.

"Kid," I said, with my voice trembling strangely, "you can depend on me," and I reached for his hand.

As I felt the icy coldness of his grasp, he tried to speak.

"What is it?" I asked, leaning closer.

"Don't tell her—"

"It's all right, old man, you can depend on me."

Then a faint smile came to his lips. "You're a gentleman," he gasped," and I'm—glad—to have met you—"

He never finished all he tried to say, but he didn't need to. As the sun swung high over the mountain top, I could still feel the faint grasp of his cold hand. The end had come, but he died like a man.

# Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

Nothing else in the world gets out of date as rapidly as a woman's hat, an automobile and a bride.

The difference between courting and marriage is the difference between going to see a girl when you want to and having to see a girl when you don't want to.

Fashion is something that makes the corn-fed girls imagine they need bustles just because the thin girls are wearing them.

One reason for the high cost of living is the fact that the woman who used to make a ten-cent box of cornstarch keep her in face powder for six months, now pays a dollar for an ounce of imported complexion dope.

Ignorance is bliss. That's why a man's wife insists upon opening his mail when he isn't around.

Anyway, there is one excuse for the tight skirt. The girls have learned how to scratch their own matches.

Some men belong to everything but their own families.

Some women trust in Providence and others make sure that the window shades are pulled down.

Marriages may be made in Heaven, but the hammock is entitled to a little credit.

This is the season of the year when the girls buy white shoes and then look as though they were wearing the boxes.

The reason a girl wants to wear expensive silk stockings every day is because she knows that the men are not supposed to see them.

All things come to those who go after them.

Who said women lacked a sense of humor? Why, they want to be humored all the time.

A whole lot of the June brides who expected a 1913 model runabout are now busy operating a 1914 model washing machine.

Women are demanding equal rights. Why, if a man went down town wearing a peek-a-boo shirt and see-more pants he would get a ride in a patrol wagon.

Before he marries, a man never realizes that a day will come when he would rather hear his wife say "supper's ready," than hear her say "I love you."

Next to losing 50 pounds nothing pleases a fat woman so much as to meet a woman who is fatter than she is.

Burning your bridges behind you will sometimes help. But most people give away the baby buggy just because the first youngster has learned to walk.

We make a lot of fun of what women do, but you never saw a woman spending any money buying hair tonic from a bald-headed barber.

Modesty is only skirt deep.

There are two occasions on which a lot of women get a bunch of flowers and a ride—when they get married and when they die.

Anyway, the old-fashioned woman who had a placket in the rear of her dress, could get on a street car without tipping the world off as to how much she paid for her stockings.

# When Wright Was Wrong

BY W. HANSON DURHAM

*Do you believe in dreams? A lot of nonsense has been written on the subject, but we all of us have had startling experiences in connection with dreams and dismissed them with the matter-of-fact explanation of "merely a coincident."*

THE breath of the blizzard seemed centered in Bolton, and as Wright turned the corner shiveringly, the full force of all its fury seemed to face him suddenly in one wild, white whirl of driving snow, which caused him to bow his head in confusion as he tried to breast the storm.

An arc light swung and swayed flickeringly overhead, and cast a cold purple haze half way down the little side street where Wright roomed, and with his benumbed hands thrust deep into his pockets, he plodded persistently along, scarcely able to lift his head sufficiently to scrutinize the long line of familiar fronts which faced him with that same monotonous similarity, each clad in its own confusing shroud of somber shadows, sifting snow and silence.

The clock in the tower of some nearby church struck the half hour after midnight, and then all was still again save for the gust of the blizzard and the rumble of a belated surface car crawling across the further end of the street beyond, and as it disappeared Wright lifted his head and stopped suddenly. He stood for a second and swiftly surveyed the familiar front that faced him, then with a sigh of satisfaction he strode up the snow-covered stone steps, and was about to draw forth his latch key, when he suddenly saw, with some surprise, that the door was already unlocked and stood slightly open.

Thinking that probably some of the tenants had thoughtlessly left the door open, Wright closed it carefully behind him as he stepped into the dark and deserted hall, and groping his way to the stairs, stumbled blindly up, grateful that he had at last reached shelter from the storm, and vaguely wondering if Marvin had got in yet.

Wright and Marvin were both on the staff of the *Sentinel,* and while Marvin was a day man and usually off duty at six, Wright was on the night shift and hardly ever was able to leave the office until after twelve, when the paper went to press, and he generally found Marvin either sound asleep when he came in or altogether absent.

Wright reached the top of the stairs, and still stumbling, groped about in the darkness until he found the door, and turning the knob noiselessly, he stepped into the room, gently closing the door behind him. Removing his coat and hat he tossed them carelessly aside, cautiously crossed the room to the gas jet at the head of the bed and began hopefully hunting his pockets for a match, but not being a smoker, like Marvin, he failed to find one, and turning instinctively to the dresser beside him, began to feel and fumble about in the darkness, but only succeeded in toppling over something that fell to the floor with a sudden smash, then silence again reigned. He stepped back and sat down heavily upon the side of the bed.

"Why don't you ever buy any matches, Marvin?" he growled gruffly, as he slipped off his shoes one by one, and kicked them impatiently across the floor, but Marvin was silent, and wondering if he were really sleeping or shamming, Wright leaned over the bed, and by the little light which came in through the solitary window, he saw the size and shape of the familiar form there beneath the blankets, and reaching over he seized him by the shoulder and shook him vigorously.

"Say, old man, got a match?" he demanded desperately. "Why don't you leave a light burning when I'm out? What's the matter with you, anyway?" and again he shook the shoulder of the sleeping man roughly. A muffled moan as if in protest, was all the answer he got, and saying no more, Wright turned and began to undress in the darkness. With chattering teeth he crawled quickly in between the blankets beside him and was soon asleep.

When Wright woke up it was still dark and he lay for some time wide awake, listening to the wail of the wind about the window and trying in vain to sleep again. He heard the clock in the tower of the church strike two, and then he turned over and tried to count himself to sleep but that, too, was useless. He was now wide awake with no sign of sleep. He wondered if Marvin were still sleeping, and sat up and listened for his usual soft, serene snore, but all was still, and rising carefully upon his elbow he leaned cautiously over and listened, but there was no sound from the sleeping man beside him, so he leaned still closer and listened longer for some sign of sleep from him, but he could hear nothing but the same steady beat of his own heart, and no move or motion from Marvin, not even a bit of breath, and reaching carefully out, Wright felt cautiously about in the darkness until his hand found and rested lightly upon the forehead of the man beside him. It was stone cold.

In sudden surprise Wright drew his hand quickly back and sat bolt upright in bed for a second, then hastily throwing aside the clothes he bent over and listened again for some sign or sound of life, but in vain. He was about to turn and spring from the bed to dress when his hand suddenly struck something wet and warm, and he leaped quickly to the floor and stood beside the window. There in the subdued light he saw with surprise and horror, that his hand was red with blood.

For the space of a single second Wright simply stood and stared in senseless surprise, then like a flash his benumbed brain seemed to clear suddenly and for the first time he realized that Marvin was murdered. He turned tremblingly and began to hunt hurriedly about in the darkness for his clothes, and getting into them somehow, he was about to bolt barefooted for the door, when he stopped suddenly, then slowly turned and went back and stood beside the bed.

Marvin had been murdered! There was no doubt about that. He had evidently been dead for some time, but Wright knew that he was alive when he came in and spoke to him about the matches an hour or more ago. For some seconds Wright stood and faced the fact fairly, wondering what was best to do under the circumstances.

He realized that it was his duty to make the murder known at once, but also saw that if he did, the police would come and would probably hold him for the murder of Marvin. He knew that Marvin was dead. If there had been any doubt in his mind about that, he would not hesitate, but it would do no good to cause a commotion now; besides,

he wanted a chance to think a little before he made any move.

He went over and sat down beside the window, and unmindful of the chill in the air, he surveyed the situation which seemed serious enough to him now. Everyone in the house probably remembered that he and Marvin had a few hasty words in the hall that morning over some trifling matter, and he remembered that he had remarked that he would get even with Marvin somehow. All this came back to him now with strange vividness. Now that Marvin had been murdered, he would probably be held for it, and how could he prove his innocence?

The more he thought of it the more confused he became, and the more certain he was that the circumstances of the crime pointed plainly to him, and that he was powerless to help himself or hinder a possible conviction. At length, driven to desperation, as he plainly saw his own danger, he sought, like some wretched hunted animal, for some avenue of escape, but saw none—save in flight.

He was sure that no one saw him when he came in, and was equally sure that he could slip out as silently and unseen. He sprang suddenly to his feet, and groping blindly in the darkness, he succeeded in finding his shoes and slipping them on. He found his coat and hat and stepping to the door opened it easily, then with one backward glance over his shoulder at the stiffening shape there upon the bed, he stepped out into the hall, and silently closed the door.

Somehow Wright reached the top of the stairs and grasping the rail firmly, he crept cautiously down step by step, into the lower hall, quietly opened the outer door and passed out into the street and the storm.

He heard the clock in the tower of the church strike three as he plodded along knee deep in the snow, and he stood for a second on the corner uncertain which way to go or what to do. He knew that he was safe for a few hours at least, but tomorrow he would be a hunted man with probably a price put upon him. Still dwelling on his own desperate danger, he hurried on again, plunging and plodding persistently through the untrodden snow.

Twice he stopped suddenly and slipped into some sheltered doorway where he stood in suspense while a patrolling policeman plodded along past. As soon as he was safely out of sight, Wright would venture forth and press on again.

Once he stopped short and suddenly as he saw the hopelessness of his haste. He was then tempted to turn about, retrace his steps and meet matters manfully, but somehow the situation seemed too serious for him to stand any chance; the circumstances all seemed particularly strong against him. He had known of certain cases where circumstantial evidence alone had convicted its man, so in desperation and dread of his own danger, he kept on, unconscious of everything, save that Marvin was murdered and that he must manage to make the most of what little time he had left.

Wright's first thought was to buy a ticket on the first train out of town, but he abandoned that plan as being foolhardy, for he was sure to be seen and followed. He had less than ten dollars in his pocket, hardly enough for an extended trip abroad, and he dared not strengthen suspicion against himself by borrowing even a small amount from any of his associates. He might perhaps, pawn his watch, but that would be folly too. In fact, flight in any direction would look strongly like guilt, and already he felt the chain of circumstantial evidence closing about him from every side.

What to do and where to go, puzzled

Wright. He could not return to his room where Marvin lay murdered. If he went back how would he account for the space of silence on his part between midnight and morning? While he was innocent of the crime itself, circumstances would go to show that he was not altogether ignorant of it. He saw now, for the first time, the mistake he had made in the folly of his frenzied flight, but it was now too late to conceal that fatal fact.

He could not return to his room, that was certain. Neither could he attract attention by attempting to leave the city for he was too well known to pass entirely unnoticed. He had two alternatives: either to go and give himself up peacefully, or to plod along in patience until some pursuing policeman picked him up. In fear and apprehension he glanced anxiously about, but saw no signs of life anywhere along the dark and deserted street.

For the next hour Wright walked wearily on. His one purpose was to keep in action, and if in his flight he failed to find freedom, it would at least keep him from freezing. Somehow, for another hour or more he managed to struggle steadily on through the still drifting snow which obliterated his footprints. Beaten and buffeted by the blizzard which hurled itself unmercifully upon him, his steps were beginning to lag and at times they faltered feebly, until at length, overcome by sheer exhaustion and exposure, Wright staggered a few steps further, then stopped suddenly and stood still for a second, leaning heavily against the cold stone of the building beside him, breathing hard.

A whirl of wind came sifting up the street, scattering the snow in a great cold cloud about him, and sweeping his hat from his head, where it lay unheeded in the snow at his feet. Wright was weary, and the cold stones against which he leaned so heavily seemed no longer hard but strangely soft and restful. Another swirl of the blizzard swept past, piling the snow higher about him, but Wright no longer cringed or cared, for a delicious drowsiness, followed by a strange sense of welcomed warmth, was already beginning to steal over him, and he was rapidly growing indifferent alike to wind and weather when someone slapped him suddenly upon the shoulder, and he heard a voice which seemed far away and faint.

"Better brace up, old man, and beat it. The cop is coming."

Wright started, opened his eyes sleepily, and mumbled something unintelligible. He wanted the man to go away and let him alone, but somehow he seemed too sleepy to say so, and his head simply dropped again in silence.

"Here, old man!" cried the voice, coming closer. "This won't do. Come out of it. You'll freeze stiff if you go to sleep here. Better brace up and go home," and someone seemed to step up and shake him savagely by the shoulder.

A solitary policeman hove in sight around the corner, glanced suspiciously at Wright, as he stepped up and stood there in the snow before him.

"Drunk?" he demanded decidedly, and he flashed his light full upon him as he spoke. "If he's a friend of yourn, you'd better hustle him home or I'll have to run him in. He'll freeze here, sure."

Wright heard him and tried to speak, but somehow he still seemed too sleepy to say anything; then he heard the man say suddenly:

"I'll get him home somehow, if I can find out who he is and where he lives."

The policeman nodded his head and said no more, but passed along. The stranger seized Wright roughly by the shoulder and shook him savagely.

"Say now, old man. Where do yor live, anyway?"

Wright heard him and tried to tell him, but somehow his tongue still seemed too thick to talk; besides, he didn't care much anyway; he simply wanted to sleep.

"He'll freeze here, sure thing," the man muttered. "I'll take him around and poke him into bed, and let him sleep it off." As he spoke, he seized Wright by the arm and swung him abruptly about.

"Now old man," he commanded calmly, "march along!"

Reeling, and mumbling in protest, Wright was firmly forced along in spite of all his overwhelming desire to stop and sleep. Several times he stopped short and almost sank into the snow, but each time he was forced to his feet again and pushed, poked and prodded mercilessly along.

Wright remembered that together they toiled and tumbled up a flight of stairs somewhere; that he was then stripped suddenly of his coat and clothes and buried beneath a burden of blankets in somebody's bed; that something hot was being forced between his chattering teeth, and then he slept.

It was nearly noon when Wright woke up and stared sleepily about him. The first face he saw was that of Marvin through a dense cloud of tobacco smoke. He started suddenly at the sight of him, and for a moment sat bolt upright in bed beneath the blankets and stared in surprise.

Marvin nodded and grinned good-naturedly, and laying aside his precious pipe, he rose slowly to his feet and approached the bed.

"Out rather late last night, eh, old man!" he remarked carelessly, and he winked wisely as he sat down on the side of the bed and crossed his long legs.

Wright stretched himself a little and yawned sleepily. Somehow his senses seemed strangely confused even yet. Marvin was murdered and that thing that sat there on the edge of the bed grinning at him must be his ghost, or else it was all a diabolical dream. He was just about to speak—to say something to make sure of his senses, when there was a sudden commotion, followed by the clattering of hoofs and the clang of a gong in the street outside.

"What's that?" demanded Wright, starting suddenly up and glancing guiltily about.

"Oh, the poor chap next door committed suicide sometime last night. Cut his throat in bed. Probably that is the police patrol," remarked Marvin indifferently.

Wright made no reply, but with one leap he was out of bed onto the floor, and calling for his clothes.

"I've got to hustle out and hunt up the particulars and get down to the office," he said simply, as he slipped on his shoes and began hunting for his hat.

"Nothing doing there," muttered Marvin meaningly. "You are too late. I tried to telephone as soon as they found the body, but the wire was down and I had to walk in with the report. That's how I happened to find you. You were all in, old man—freezing fast."

"Yes, I guess I was," sighed Wright shiveringly.

# Healthy Belts

BY W. G. CLUGSTON

*An ingenious fakir sells "health belts" to dead people and finds life easy. A repeat order from a satisfied customer nearly puts him out of business.*

RUBBER SMITH made a luxurious living by selling electric healing belts to dead people.

Yes, by selling them to dead people. Rubber was so addicted to the habit of making money that he would lie awake at night until he had kicked every stitch of bed clothes on the floor, trying to think of a way to make more money. He was also so addicted to the habits of luxury and laziness that he wouldn't even cut his own whiskers with a modern safety razor lawn-mower to save fifteen cents, nor would he exert himself to the extent of manicuring his own toe nails when he could find a respectable looking lady chiropodist who would perform the task for him. And his plan of selling electric healing belts to dead people was simple, unique and very profitable.

A supply of cheap electric belts was procured at wholesale prices, which made them cost Rubber twelve and one-half cents each, delivered. With these in the bottom of his trunk, Rubber would go into a city, subscribe for all the daily papers, acquaint himself with the janitors and office boys of all the undertakers, and sometimes he would go so far as to buy a coroner a few drinks if the coroner seemed to be a man who would appreciate such favors.

From these sources—the daily papers, the janitors of the undertakers and the coroners—Rubber learned of every death of any importance in the city where he might be operating.

This done, a twelve and one-half cent belt, together with full directions for its use, and a long list of testimonials which proved its marvelous healing powers, was neatly packed in a box and C.O.D'd to the address of the dead person for the small and insignificant sum of five dollars and fifty cents.

The theory upon which the system was operated was that the package would arrive at the home of the dead person before the corpse was removed, or while the sorrowing relatives were still discussing the good qualities and noble characteristics of the recently departed, and that some of these sorrowing relatives would "fork over" the five-fifty out of respect for the memory of the dead.

It was none of Rubber's business whether the sorrowing relatives shed bitter tears because the thing had not arrived sooner, or whether they paid so little attention to it as to allow it to become one of the liabilities of the estate. But he made it his business to see that they thought the belt had been ordered by the dead person some time before, and this was done by means of a little note which regretted the delay, and which guaranteed that the money would be refunded if it did not prove as represented.

And, in most cases, the system worked splendidly and profitably. Occasionally Rubber would receive one of his belts

back, marked "Refused," and whenever this happened he always cursed the stingy relatives who had no more regard for the deeds of their dead, and very often on such occasions he would think of the shallowness of the living, and of how soon man is forgotten when once the sod falls upon his face. But, in most cases, the belts were received and paid for, and Rubber's only uneasiness and anxiety came from the fact that he did not know just how the eyes of the law would view his new field of industry, should it by any chance be called to the attention of some young and inexperienced prosecutor, or some unsympathetic police magistrate who might be getting ready to make another election campaign.

However, as we stated above, business was always pretty good with Rubber, and the five-fiftys came in with such certain regularity that neither was he compelled to labor in the fields of his chin whiskers, nor was he forced to soil his hands with the dirt of his toe nails.

But one day an incident happened that brought despair to the heart of Rubber, and that caused this king of the electric healing belt industry more trouble and worry than have been experienced by many of the barons of legitimate industry who have yielded to the temptations of graft, and who have paid for their dishonesty by being exposed through the daily papers, and given long terms in the federal prisons.

Rubber had invaded a new field, having been drawn hither by the numerous deaths of its respectable citizens, and by the legitimate desire to see his business grow and prosper.

In this city, however, Rubber found that the coroners were not used to being treated by strangers and resented it, and worse than this, the undertakers, janitors and office boys, were such dead ones themselves that they couldn't have found out the names and addresses of their employers' victims if they had been allowed to wait until the moss had filled up the lettering on the tombstones.

And so Rubber was forced to rely solely upon the information received from the daily papers. This was sufficient for operating purposes, but it gave him no way of personally verifying the reliability of his prospective customers. But obstacles have to be overcome in every business, and great gain often carries with it a great risk which only the brave and the resolute can successfully face.

The first day's shipment of belts in this new field included one to a Mrs. Frances E. Bellum, of Euclid Avenue. Afterwards, Rubber always thought that he had had a "hunch" about this name when he was packing the belt, but whether he did or not, this belt was sent along with the rest, and the next day he received a perfectly good five-fifty from Mrs. Frances E.

Now, it so happened, all to Rubber's undoing, that the Frances E. Bellum whose death was reported in the *Star*, was a very old and very respectable lady of color, whose residence was not on Euclid Avenue, and whose past and present addresses were wholly unknown to the express company and its highly efficient employees.

It also so happened that a very rich and very delicate widow by the name of Frances E. Bellum did live on Euclid Avenue, and the highly efficient employees of the said express company did know her present address, and from contact with her peevish nature, had a pretty good idea of what her future one would be. And so, to this Mrs. Frances E. Bellum the precious belt was very carefully and very quickly taken, as all express packages were in times so long since that the mind of the writer runneth to the contrary.

The said Frances E. Bellum, the one who was alive, and who was a widow and a delicate person, received the package, opened and examined it, read from the yellow testimonial slip of the marvelous cures it would effect, and in the despair of her physical condition, she paid the five-fifty, and proceeded at once to harness herself with the belt, somewhat after the fashion that a city school-teacher would try to harness a plow mule with a pair of chain traces and a cotton back-band.

The remarkable part about the whole affair was that Mrs. Frances E. began to get better of all her maladies immediately, and her physicians were unable to persuade her any longer that their daily calls and doses of bread pills were necessary to keep her from surrendering her body to the worms of the earth, and her soul to the angels of Heaven.

Mrs. Frances E. ate and slept, and enjoyed life as she never had before, and she considered the mysterious arrival of the magic belt as nothing short of an act of Providence, done, all in this strange and mysterious manner, for the sake of her own physical comfort and the discomfort of her attending physicians.

But all of these things would not have troubled Rubber, and he would have felt no such animosity towards detectives or dread of the vengeance of the law if he had not been so money-mad, and if he had been honest enough to put better quality into the making of his wares.

After wearing the belt for a few days, Mrs. Frances E. discovered that it was gradually returning to the elements from which it was made, and in a short time the precious thing dropped to pieces entirely. If Rubber had known, he might have told her that a twelve and one-half cent belt would not harness the health of a wealthy widow for very long at a time, and he might have left her enough belts to do her the rest of her natural lifetime; but Rubber did not know, and consequently he was not to blame—either for the belt dropping to pieces, or for the return to Mrs. Frances E. of all of her pain and suffering and delicate health.

In a short time the poor woman became almost distracted over the loss of the belt, and her malady became worse than it ever had been. She searched in vain for the name of the manufacturers of the belt, or for some clue as to the place from which it had come. She ordered every kind of electric belt she could find in that and neighboring cities. But none of them were like the one she had worn, and none of them did her any good. Her doctors could give her no relief, and she endured the agonies of a thousand deaths every hour of the day.

At last, when she had endured and suffered all that her frail body could stand, and when death, poverty or anything, would be better than her present state, she decided that she must have another electric belt like the first one, even if it cost her every cent of her large fortune.

A private detective was sent for. He was shown the remaining fragment of the great belt, was given the meager details of how it came to Mrs. Bellum's possession, and was instructed to find a duplicate of it at any cost or hazard.

The young detective, who considered himself equal to the occasion of producing the originator of electricity itself if necessary, took the case, and set about his task at once, *a la* Sherlock Burns, Scotland Yards.

During all of this time, Rubber had remained in the city, and had continued to do a thriving business. As the undertaker, the florist and the minister prospered, so did Rubber prosper. People were dying in a manner after his own

big heart, and the reverence and respect of the living for their dead made him feel that humanity was not so bad after all, and that there was still a certain reverence for the dead and a respect for their struggles in life.

The first move of the detective was to visit the express offices. There he found a record of the package that had been received by Mrs. Frances E., and he also found that it had been sent by one R. K. Smith, Distributing Agent.

"Ah, good!" thought the detective. "Now to find R. K. Smith, Distributing Agent, secure the belt, take a little trip to Chicago on the Madame, return and tell her what a hard time I have had, and it is done."

After much diligent search, the detective found that one R. K. Smith lived in a flat on Chestnut street and another had rooms at a secluded hotel. Of all the Smiths of every part of the city, these were the only two with the initials R. K., so this made it all the more of a "lead pipe" for the detective.

An interview with the R. K. who lived on Chestnut street developed the fact that he was a floor walker in a glue factory, and that he wouldn't know an electric healing belt from an electric asparagus shredder. So the other R. K. must be the distributing agent.

At the hotel, the detective waited long and patiently to see his man; but Mr. Smith seemed disinclined to see visitors in his room, even on the most important business. However, the detective took his station near Mr. Smith's door, and when the latter came out some hours later, the detective cornered him.

"Are you not Mr. R. K. Smith?" asked the detective, extending his hand.

Rubber nodded affirmatively, and eyed his man with all the analysis of his nature.

"And are you not the distributing agent for a certain kind of electric healing belt?" asked the detective.

"No; I am a salesman for the International Rubber Company of Evansville, Indiana," returned Rubber, rather nervously, and with this he hurried on down the hall without waiting for further developments.

The detective was not satisfied with his interview, and, as we all know, detectives are never baffled by such methods. So the detective shadowed Rubber, who, after turning many corners and crossing many streets, entered an express office. As soon as Rubber came out of the office the detective went in. His suspicions were verified. The man he had been shadowing had just received several collections, and had called for a package that had been left at the office a short time before for delivery.

The detective hurried back to the hotel, confident that his case would soon be completed and the goods procured. But, upon his arrival at the hotel, he was informed that Mr. Smith had just left, and that he had given up his rooms and checked out.

However, this was not defeat to the detective. It was only delay, which is a part of the game of detecting, and sometimes is a part of the finding of a man who sells electric belts to dead people. The search that followed was long and tedious, and poor Mrs. Frances E. was almost dead with suffering. But at last she received a telegram stating that the distributing agent had been located in a distant city, and that the belt would be procured at once. This sustained the poor woman in her suffering, and kept hope alive in her frail body.

This time, however, the detective determined to make sure, and he thought that it might be better to try to secure one of the belts without a personal interview with Mr. Smith. At an express office he found the names and addresses of two persons to whom Rubber had

sent packages. He would interview these parties, and probably get one of them to order a belt for him.

That afternoon the work was taken up. At the first place, the detective found a funeral in progress, and he was somewhat surprised to find that it was the funeral of the man whom he sought. He made no inquiry, but hurried on to the other address as it was getting late, and he wanted to finish the day's work.

At the other address, he was at the door by a big solemn-looking man, and when he gave the name of the person whom he wished to see, the man opened the door, took his hat, and led him down a narrow hall. Then the man pointed to a door, and turned and left him. The detective entered the room, and there was nothing in it except a corpse. A few candles were burning at the head of the casket, but there was not a living soul in the room except himself. The detective walked easily over to the coffin, peeped in, then hurriedly left the room. As he walked down the hall, he saw no sign of the man who had shown him in, and he felt like a fool and looked like something else.

When he had sneaked quietly out of the house, he decided that he would abandon this method, and he began to wonder what connection there was between buying an electric healing belt and dying almost at the same time. His detective instinct set his mind to working as to the probability of these men having met some foul and mysterious death at the hands of this mysterious distributing agent, but he knew that the men had been dead more than a few hours, and he was not sure that the packages had been delivered to them from the express office.

However, as we have said above, for the good of the country, and the safety and protection of our citizens and our valuables, we must remember that detectives are not to be baffled, and that this man was no traitor to his profession. He would see this distributing agent, and he would have one of his belts at any cost. And getting one of the belts was the only thing that he was being paid for by Mrs. Frances E.

When Rubber returned to his room the next afternoon, he bolted the door, placed a pile of papers on his table and and sat down, at peace with the world and bearing malice in his heart towards no living man. He would have probably dropped off into a peaceful, quiet nap, or he might have devoted an idle half hour to the entries at Juarez, but just as he was getting settled in his chair, and getting his feet properly placed on the table, the door of his closet opened quietly and the detective covered him with a gun.

When Rubber looked around, he was too terror-stricken to move and too astonished to speak. Visions of striped clothes, a bald head, and windows that were man-screened, passed through his mind in rapid march. The detective showed his badge of authority, advanced, and again asked Rubber if he were not distributing agent for a certain electric healing belt.

Rubber would have again denied his occupation, and would probably have tried to make a lightning connection with a rubber goods house in some distant city, but he realized that the detective had been in the room during his absence and had probably searched his trunk.

"Yes, sir," he answered nervously; "I have the agency for a belt that is claimed to benefit people when nothing else can help. I carry a few of them with me, but I rarely ever sell one."

The detective stopped him. "Well, I don't care how many of them you sell, or anything about it, but a lady by the name of Mrs. Frances E. Bellum bought one of them from you, and she says that

she will die unless she procures another one. What do you ask for them?"

Rubber was again almost beyond speaking, but he appeared as indifferent as he could and answered:

"Well, about twenty-five cents."

"Give me five dollars' worth of them," growled the detective. "I have chased you half way across the continent trying to get one for the old lady, and I ain't hankering for another such fool job."

Rubber gave the detective every belt he had in his room, every guarantee slip and every testimonial. The detective took them and walked out, and he had hardly reached the street when a squad from the local force came up and put Rubber under arrest.

Rubber was charged with the crime of his occupation, but he denied all to the very last. His room and belongings were searched, but no evidence was found and he was turned loose. The whole affair left him in a perpetual dread of the law and all of its officers. However, being a progressive business man, Rubber learned a lesson from it, and now he has a *bona fide* forged order for every electric healing belt that he sends out. Also, he has a longing for the one honest, living testimonial that he could probably get from Mrs. Frances E. Bellum, if he only had the nerve to ask for it. But Rubber lacks nerve because selling electric healing belts to dead people does not require it.

# Three Ways Out

BY EDWIN BAIRD

*Things are never as bad as they appear. If you don't believe this old truism read this story of a banker who broke faith and looked down the muzzle of a ten shot automatic.*

ITS fascination was horrible. Oilily clean, evilly trim, it lay on the glass cover of the study desk—an automatic revolver advertised to "shoot ten times quick."

Sam Carlock, president of the Carlock Trust Company, had just uncased it; and he sat now at the desk, head resting on his spread fingers, gazing at it stonily. At his elbow was the remainder of a Scotch highball, and a nearby ashtray was heaped with cigarette stumps. A pile of unopened letters sprawled diagonally athwart the desk, where they had been shoved hastily. The room was deathly still.

Presently he sat back and picked up the revolver. The blue steel gleamed in the electric light; the nickled parts glinted wickedly. He saw his hand tremble, and thrust it under the shaded desk lamp. The trembling did not abate. The revolver clattered noisily upon the heavy glass.

"Hell! What a rank coward!"

Hearing his voice, he laughed mirthlessly aloud. "I'm getting the willies," he muttered, and rose and took a turn about the study, pausing once to select a cigarette and again to light it. After a minute, revolver in hand, he walked to a mirror in the adjoining bedroom.

Standing before the mirror, face contorted against the acrid smoke curling from his cigarette, he glanced at the round black muzzle of the revolver—whence Death could issue "ten times quick"—then placed the muzzle against his right temple. Palm, thumb and three fingers gripped the handle grimly; his right forefinger tightened upon the trigger—

*"Sam!"*

He wheeled violently, involuntarily shoving the weapon in a pocket of his sack coat. His wife, superb in a Worth opera gown of pale green and white, stood on the threshold of the corridor door. For a space neither spoke, though each surmised accurately what the other thought.

"It's nearly eight, Sam, and you're not dressed. We shall be late." Her carefully-modulated voice expressed only surprise.

"No opera for us tonight, Edith," he said. "I—oh, drop that pose! You know I can see through it. Now come in and close the door, and we'll talk things over."

She drew her level black brows together, and a satiny line of annoyance rippled the rose-leaf skin near her mouth. She was an unusually pretty woman, dark, slim, full of fire.

She entered, closed the door behind her and remained standing, one white, bejewelled hand on the glass knob.

"Sit down, Edith." And as she complied: "You saw the—revolver?"

"Sam—Sam!—"

"You drove me to it," he cried, and suddenly buried his face in his hands.

"Your damned extravagance, your eternal climbing—I couldn't keep up, that's all."

There was a pause. Finally:

"How much—did you take, Sam?"

"Roughly, a quarter of a million. We've been living on it for the past year. Your trips to Europe, that gown you wear, your dinner tonight—all were bought with other people's money. Tomorrow or the next day they'll find me out." He lifted his bowed head, and she saw his face was pale, almost ghastly. "And it'll be Joliet for me when they do, for that piratical crew will have no mercy."

Rising, he walked into the study and returned with a fresh highball. His wife had not moved from the huge leather chair, which almost submerged her. Her level dark eyes regarded him calmly, even coldly, as she supported her dainty chin on two slim, beautiful fingers.

"You mustn't be found out," she said. "You understand that?"

With a savage movement, he snapped the beads of perspiration from his forehead and lighted a cigarette. Smoking furiously, chewing the straw tip to a pulp, sipping his highball, he strode back and forth in the warm, softly-lighted room. Suddenly he confronted her.

"Do you know what that means?" he demanded. "It means everything will have to go. I'll be ruined—wiped out. There won't be enough left to clothe a flea."

She looked up swiftly. "You mean if you pay back—"

"Exactly," he nodded. "If I pay back what I stole. It's either that or state's prison."

"There must be another way out." Her cold eyes narrowed upon him. "There *is* another way!"

He stirred his highball slowly, avoiding her gaze.

"Yes," he said, "there is."

"Well?"

"Grogan."

"What's Grogan?" But she knew well enough, and he knew that she knew. Everybody in Chicago knew Grogan—Timothy Grogan, the "Garbage Man," whose career began as a scavenger and reached its apex as the buidler of a mammoth reduction plant, whose political machinations were as unsavory as the commodity which made him famous. And who had thrice been a visitor at the Carlock's home.

"Grogan," said Carlock, "has offered to save me. Damn him!"

"His price?" she asked.

He tinkled the ice cube against the glass in his hand, and his face grew dully red. "The snake! I should have knocked him down when he named it."

"What does he want?" Her voice was colder.

"He wants"—Carlock licked his lips—"he wants—Gladys."

Mrs. Carlock recoiled; her hand, a-glitter with diamonds, fluttering out before her as if to ward off a blow.

"*Oh!* How can you repeat it? It's—it's heinous!"

He nodded; his teeth sunken in his lip until the skin whitened.

"I know. He has daughters as old as Gladys. His son, Robert, is even older—"

She scarcely heard. Her weak, pretty mouth quivered piteously. She was thinking of the marriage she had planned for Gladys, of the stride it would have taken toward the triumph she craved. The match, for some reason, had missed fire. Gladys was rather uncertain, rather inclined to reflect the lowly origin of her parentage. Perhaps that was why.

And then, vividly, bitterly, the woman thought of her incessant striving for social recognition; she recalled the early

struggle for a foothold, remembered how she and Sam had fought mediocrity shoulder to shoulder. Sam worked hard, and they attained decent means; but, still unsatisfied, she spurred him on, until, by degrees, they touched elbows with affluence. And always her struggle for place went tirelessly on, handicapped by lack of family, though aided by cash. The thought that her efforts had gone for naught infuriated her.

She looked at him whom she held responsible. Her eyes flashed wrathfully.

"You thief!" were the words that leaped to her tongue; but she uttered no sound. Instead, she rose quietly and walked to the door.

"Where are you going, Edith?"

"To the opera." She glanced at the clock. "I shall be very late. I shall also have to make apologies for you."

He gaped at her, his lower jaw sagging so that deep lines extended from nose to mouth. "By Jove, you're an icy proposition! What about this—this other thing?"

"Perhaps you can settle that best—alone." And, almost imperceptibly, her eyes rested on the coat pocket where she had seen him put the revolver. Then, with no further word, she went out and closed the door noiselessly behind her.

He went to the study, mixed another highball, picked up the glass and agitated the contents with the long-handled spoon. After several moments of deep thought he put the glass down, untouched, and took the revolver from his pocket. Memory of a recent newspaper item about the half million dollar life insurance he carried recurred to him. The item was true. He was shaking violently now. His nerve had gone to pieces. He gripped the revolver firmly in both hands, glanced stealthily over his shoulder before placing the small black hole—from which Death could issue "ten times quick"—against his breast, in the region of his heart. He crooked his right thumb upon the trigger.

"May God forgive me!" he breathed.

A tap on the door. He opened it, and the butler extended a salver on which was Timothy Grogan's card. He tore the card in two and flung it into the waste basket.

"Get him out! Tell him anything—only get him out of this house!" He raised his voice angrily, and the revolver, which he had forgotten, was held at his side in a way that appeared menacing.

The servant fled, and so precipitately that he bumped into Grogan, ascending the staircase. Faultlessly attired in evening clothes, tall, blond, and well turned out by an English valet, Grogan would have passed for a gentleman anywhere—until he opened his mouth. His speech betrayed him.

"Howdy ye do, Caarlock, me b'y?" He came breezily into the study, equally oblivious to the revolver in Carlock's hand, the latter's coldness, and the butler's evident perturbation.

Carlock scowled and said nothing. Remembering the revolver, he replaced it in his pocket. Grogan turned and deliberately closed the door in the butler's face. Then he made himself comfortable on a wide divan, took a gold cigar case from his hip pocket and offered it to his host, who declined. Lighting one of the cigars, he leaned back and crossed his legs.

"I remaark, Caarlock, me lad," he said casually, "that ye're contemplatin' sooycide." And before Carlock could more than gasp at the audacity: "Shame upon ye! 'Tis a coward's way out."

"It's ten thousand times more preferable," flared Carlock, beside himself with rage, "than your way out."

Grogan smiled easily in a cloud of fragrant smoke. Grogan smoked good cigars.

"Ye will have yer joke, me b'y, I know,

but I'm here to talk sense wid ye, so nix on th' play-actin'—"

"Get out of this house!" roared Carlock, and advanced threateningly. Grogan made no move. "You won't go? We'll see." He jerked the revolver from his pocket. Grogan made no move.

Then a young girl's voice was heard in the hall below, and Gladys Carlock, radiantly lovely in a smart street dress, swept into the room, oval cheeks glowing from the frosty outdoors. Her fine eyes embraced the two men in a swift glance of understanding; but, like her mother, she knew how to mask her thoughts.

"Good evening, Mr. Grogan. Father, where's mother?"

"Gone to the opera."

"Then you shall hear the news first." She stepped quickly to her father, flung her arms about his neck, whispered in his ear. Her fresh, girlish face had grown suddenly crimson.

Carlock's shoulders drooped, as he removed her arms and held her from him.

"Married!" he gasped. "To whom?"

She slipped from his hands, hastened toward the door. Her eye caught Grogan's, devouring her voluptuously.

"To somebody," she said over her shoulder, "of whom Mr. Grogan is fond."

At the door she called to some person awaiting her summons. A slender, blond young man entered, and, unashamed, placed his arm around her pliant waist.

Grogan leaped to his feet.

"Bobby!" And he stared speechlessly at his son, embracing the beautiful young creature beloved by both. After a space, he sank back upon the divan and turned to Carlock, hands outspread, palms up. "I say, Carlock—give us a swing at that corn juice, will ye, now?"

Carlock regarded him austerely; but the old Irishman's expression of helpless defeat was too much for a normal sense of humor. Carlock smiled, as he rang the servant's bell.

"I'll drink with you, Grogan," said he, "but it'll be wine—not whiskey."

# In Hell Hole Swamp

BY OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

*Through a dark, malarial, snake-infested swamp at night, the father of a murdered child and a sheriff pursue relentlessly the guilty negro, one intent upon murder, the other upon capture,—the arm of vengeance versus the arm of the law.*

THE croaking of a thousand frogs told of the coming of night in Hell Hole swamp, and a lone owl hooted sadly from the topmost branches of a stunted pine. From every tree the long, gray moss drooped disconsolately, hanging in great, cloudlike bunches from the barren branches; the water lilies floated, motionless, in a putrid mass of green slime. Small, vicious mosquitoes droned in swarms which were visible to the naked eye, even in the failing light, as they swirled and eddied in living currents of tantalizing monotone. A huge water moccasin uncoiled and slid silently into the stagnant water from the root of a decayed stump.

From afar there came the sloshing splash of water—it grew louder; a negro dashed through the barren undergrowth, ploughed through the slime and threw himself wearily on the root which had been occupied by the snake a few minutes previously.

The man was short and stocky; his huge corded muscles stood out in bold relief from his glistening flesh; his tremendous clawlike hands opened and closed convulsively; and he breathed in short, whistling, labored gasps, his right hand resting for a moment on his heaving chest. His clothes were in rags; the remains of a single suspender holding the torn trousers in place. He wore neither shoes nor stockings, and his legs and feet were trickling blood from a number of tiny, ugly wounds.

His face was distorted with terror as he stood motionless and listened intently; and then, satisfied, lay back against the stump. His eyes, wild with fear, roved restlessly, peering through the swiftly gathering gloom. Through the moss bunches above, the rays of the setting sun made a valiant effort to force their way, and the little glen looked like a cave interior. A frog, perched on a root, watched the negro attentively for a few seconds, croaked defiantly, and disappeared; once more the owl hooted, and the man leaped to his feet in terror, then, recognizing the sound, he sank again to the ground, his tense muscles relaxing; but in his eyes there remained the awful look of the hunted animal.

Before the sheriff's office an excited crowd had gathered: motley and eager, armed for the man hunt. The best and the worst were there, armed alike, all prompted by one motive, each intent on the same end. In the doorway stood the sheriff, gun in hand. His olive-drab shirt was open at the collar, disclosing a bull-like neck, corded thickly with muscle; two revolvers swung easily at his belt, while in a hip pocket an ugly clasp knife rested in a fanciful leather sheath. He wore high hunting boots; his felt hat was pulled well down over his forehead; a huge canteen of water hung by a strap from his shoulder; a small knapsack was fastened securely to

his broad back; and the pockets of his shirt were filled with buckshot shells. He was speaking, forcing attention with his resonant voice and steely eyes, as he faced the group before him.

"You fellows better get back home. I'm a-goin' after this nigger alone, an' I'll git him if it takes ten years."

The crowd murmured, but softly; for it knew the sheriff.

"He's yonder in Hell Hole," volunteered one. "It's foolish to go alone."

"I've done it before, an' I know the swamp as well as him. An' you-all ain't a-comin' 'cause there ain't a-goin' to be no lynchin'."

"Lynching," said one, "is too good."

"I agree with you, brother." The sheriff singled out the speaker with his eye. "But this yere nigger comes back with me, an' he gits a fair tri'l."

The primitive instinct of the mob was uppermost; the men talked among themselves.

"He'll get no fair tri'l in this yere town, She'iff," said the spokesman. "Thet nigger'll hang time he sets foot yere."

"No, boys." The sheriff talked as he would have spoken to children. "The nigger's comin' back with me—an' you ain't a-goin' to lynch him."

A horse, foam-flecked and weary, rattled through the village, raising a blinding dust-cloud as it clattered through the dry sand. Its rider pulled up sharply at the door of the sheriff's office and leaped lightly from the saddle, throwing the reins to a lanky negro, who, with distended eyes, stood, fascinated, listening to the talk of the infuriated men. Tall, and ungainly of figure, the newcomer forced instant attention. His was the rugged face of the Carolina farmer, set with iron determination and unappeasable anger, and his beady eyes sparkled a menace from beneath the black, bushy brows. A revolver peeped forth from his hip; in his right hand he carried an automatic shotgun. The crowd recognized him, and made way. He faced the sheriff, eyes blazing.

"Whar you goin'?" he demanded hoarsely.

"After that—nigger." The sheriff was calm.

"You stay here," threateningly; "he's my man."

"I'm a-goin', I said; an' I don't need no help."

"I ain't offerin' of no help. I'm a-goin' to kill that beast, an' I won't stand no she'iff buttin' in, neither!"

The sheriff smiled grimly. "I'm goin'," he said simply.

"Better not!" The man had advanced as he spoke, and now faced the sheriff squarely. Their eyes met unwaveringly, in a clash of indomitable wills.

"Why?"

"He—he was—my—li'l boy, She'iff;" the voice of the big farmer broke, and he finished fiercely, as though ashamed of his feeling, "an' I'll kill that—or he'll git me; one."

"You can't come with me."

"I ain't a-reckoned on goin' with you. I'm goin' now an' I'm goin' alone; an' I give you fair warnin', She'iff, don't you interfere!"

He turned on his heel and strode rapidly away, first gruffly ordering the lanky negro to stable his tired horse.

Silently the crowd watched his progress down the street, as he swung along swiftly, looking neither to the right nor left, and a hum of speculation started.

"That's the pore kid's daddy," volunteered one to a travelling man. "The little feller was murdered, an' they've gone into Hell Hole swamp after the nigger. They'll git him, too."

Ten minutes later, the sheriff, alone, disappeared into the swamp.

For a long, long time, the negro re-

mained on his mouldy seat listening, and occasionally he wiped the beads of sweat from his fevered forehead. He unsheathed a long, dangerous-looking knife and gingerly tested the razor-edge blade, his bloodshot eyes gleaming devilishly. Once he drew it gently across the ball of his thumb, and cursed softly when the keen edge made a fine incision; then he looked dumbly, half-frightened, at the thin stream of blood, and washed his thumb in the slimy water. From his hip pocket he produced a bottle of moonshine whiskey, and drank deeply, grunting like an animal as he lay back, temporarily content and bereft of fear.

But the horror of the chase grew in him once again, and he arose restlessly, for he knew the caliber of the two men who were his inevitable pursuers, and he shuddered as he thought of their reputation as swamp rangers; he knew that these two only, of all the white men in two counties, knew every pitfall and deathbog in Hell Hole swamp.

With the unreasoning fear of the pursued he wanted to run, run; whither, he knew not, but his instinct carried him farther and farther through the gloom into the center of the droning, croaking, hooting terror of darkness.

Night settled noiselessly, like a huge mantle, over Hell Hole swamp, and dread filled the fugitive's heart. His terror was more unreasoning than before, for, in the manner of his kind, he feared the darkness: feared it with a deep, unreasoning dread, an inherent terror. He could not recognize the night as his ally, and he stumbled on and on, splashing through the water, slipping constantly, stopping every few seconds to listen, his eyes gleaming unnaturally the while.

He cursed as he crashed and splashed his way in a huge circle. He cursed because he was afraid, and then because he continually stumbled and fell, for the night was dark; the negro could not see the moon, and the stars which studded the heavens were invisible above the impenetrable mantle of gray moss. He cursed that moss; it was typical of the swamp, and he knew it, but it shut out the light. His legs bled profusely where the cruel leafless undergrowth slashed at him.

Swarms of malarial mosquitoes lighted on his face, his neck, his arms, whenever he paused to rest, and he slapped at them fearfully. With every few steps he jumped, for he knew that snakes, poisonous snakes, abounded, and he was in mortal terror of their scarlet fangs. Once he stepped on a slimy, partially disintegrated root which lay imbedded in the muck under the surface of the greenish water, and he screamed in sudden terror as through his mind there flashed a picture of a horse which had once been killed under him, struck by a tiny rattler.

Onward he stumbled, quaffing from the whiskey flask in his pocket. Then terror of the darkness overcame his fear of detection, and he cut and lighted a pine-knot torch, holding it high above his head, illuminating the swamp clearly within the radius of a few feet; the tall pines and grayish, leafless swamp oaks rose in the awesome grandeur of fathomless silhouette from a bed of thick, ill-smelling water and scrub undergrowth. He glanced into the water, and then looked away with a vague, nameless fear gnawing at his vitals, for the sight of his mirrored terror accentuated his awful fear. Beyond the narrow circle of light he could see nothing; the torch in his hand only served to make the blackness more dense. Muttering imprecations and mouthing scraps of prayer, talking incoherently to himself, he crouched low and waded on, swinging through the shallow water with a long, low, apish stride, holding the torch

above him. He discerned the splash of pursuing feet, and halted, every nerve strained.

A revolver cracked sharply a short distance away; the bullet spanked into the trunk of a tree not three feet from his head!

The nerveless fingers spasmodically released their hold on the blazing torch, and it plunged into the water, where its flame died with a hopeless, sizzling gurgle.

The negro ran swiftly, with long, splashing, shuffling, sliding strides. At the corners of his mouth tiny flecks of foam appeared.

The sheriff turned into the swamp near the railroad track which marked one of the boundaries of the town. He knew the inherent cunning of his quarry, and he went prepared for any emergency. For years he had hunted man and beast through this swamp, and he knew it foot by foot; in the state of South Carolina there was no other swamp as dangerous, and in the state there was no other man so thoroughly competent to hold the office of official manhunter for the trackless waste.

His muscular right hand clutched the shotgun tightly; the left rested easily and naturally on the butt of a heavy revolver. He planned a strategic campaign: the fugitive, he figured, would go straight to the center of the swamp, and then lose himself in a wild, objectless attempt to fool his pursuers. The sheriff knew that no man could pick a path through that infested fastness at night; and he walked slowly and almost noiselessly, choosing his footings with care, ready for instant action, intent on capture, as through the fever-laden wastes he followed the blazed path of Duty.

He made little of the lone, dangerous chase through the swamp; in his makeup there were none of the white corpuscles which make for heroics. He had served his county faithfully and fearlessly for fifteen years, and duty to him was second nature.

Darkness settled like a pall over the swamp. The sheriff halted prudently and ate sparingly of the light store of lunch which he carried in the knapsack. Then he struck a match, carefully housing the flame in the cup of his big palms, and measured out a dose of quinine and whiskey to ward off the malaria. The mosquitoes swarmed about him, and brushing them off impatiently, he started on again indefatigably. Once he thought of turning back and restarting his hunt in the morning, but there flashed through his agile mind a picture of the dramatic scene before the door of his office, and he set his teeth hard and ploughed on, determined to prevent a second murder.

Minutes passed—hours. On and on he waded through the muck and mire, the succulent ooze closing tenaciously about his feet and seeping insistently through the eyelets of his hunting boots. His hands were bleeding slightly, and his trousers were torn; but the terror of the swamp did not strike him for he was filled with the exultation of the hunter. He paused, and the muscles of his hand hardened in visible ridges as the fingers closed automatically about the stock. Far off through the night he saw the blazing of a pine torch, and, knowing the nature of the man he was pursuing, he understood.

"I'll crease 'im," he muttered, and advanced cautiously.

He shifted the shotgun to his left hand, and in his right he nursed the larger of the two revolvers—a huge six-chambered .44. His sharp eyes pierced the darkness of the immediate vicinity, and he crept softly ahead, avoiding stumps and yawning holes of quickmud with marvelous cunning.

He drew closer to the negro, and

squatted down, muscles tensed, behind a decayed mass of slimy, giant roots; resting his revolver butt on a crotch, he aimed carefully.

His shotgun, placed carelessly against a stump, slipped, tottered, and fell splashing into the water. The sheriff waited, breathless, but the negro had heard; his closely cropped head flew upward, and the hand which held the torch dropped swiftly. The revolver spoke, cracking sharply in the awesome stillness of the night, and the torch dropped into the water: sizzled, spluttered, and went out in a little cloud of pungent steam.

"Got 'im," grated the sheriff exultingly.

Then there came to his ears the regular splash, splash, of the man's running steps as he dashed away, unhurt, and occasionally he heard a stream of poorly muffled oaths as the hunted man stumbled and fell.

Vengeance and Duty allied, relentlessly pursued Life through the grimness of the night. Burning with bloodlust, thrilled with the primitive passion of the man-hunt, and writhing in impotent rage at the thought of his murdered son, his only child, the father entered the swamp, blind to all dangers, and intent on one object. The negro fled, terror-stricken, fear paramount; his every move prompted by the inborn love of life; except in a vague way the cause of it all was forgotten; the three men lived in the present, the subjects of their emotions, believing the end worthy of the means and of themselves.

The father entered the swamp at the far side after a rapid detour. The mental process was simple: it was natural to suppose that the negro would make for the haven held out to him by the other side. That the quarry would harbour the thought of voluntarily spending the night in the swamp the father knew to be extremely unlikely, for he was well aware of the deep-rooted terror of all negroes for the night with its unnamable, invisible and unknown dangers. He had heard of fugitive negroes living in the other swamps of the state for days and days, existing on berries; but no one lived in Hell Hole.

He advanced noiselessly. Around him thousands of frogs raised their raucous voices in grating unison to the canopy of drooping gray moss overhead, and the tiny insects of the night droned away in a curdling singsong of discord. Occasionally the hoot of an owl broke the oppressive sameness of sound.

Sharp and loud, there came to his ears the sound of a shot. He paused abruptly, and listened. The crack had been distinct and he knew that it had been caused by a heavy-calibred revolver. He gripped his gun more firmly and waited; evidently the shot had been fired at a distance greater than a quarter of a mile.

He heard the splashing of running feet; once the runner fell, and the father exultingly listened to the stream of vile profanity, as he recognized the negro's voice.

Bringing the shotgun to his shoulder, he calmly awaited the coming of his victim, the grim smile of the voluntary executioner distorting his iron features. The splashing drew nearer; the water in the little glade at his feet ruffled. Reverberating like thunder, the automatic spoke once, twice—seven times; echoing awesomely through the quietude of the forest marsh.

From the black throat there came a wild yell of terror; then, for a second, all was still—

As the sheriff's bullet struck the stump, the negro dashed madly away

through the swamp, straight toward the side from which he had entered. He ran by instinct, unreasoningly, filled with a mad desire to escape a known danger, and he plunged unthinkingly into the unknown. Hundreds of yards he ran, stirring the slimy water into an unwilling foam, then pausing to listen. The steps of his pursuer came relentlessly nearer, directly behind.

His countenance seamed with terror unutterable, he gasped painfully, clutching spasmodically at his heaving chest with both huge, horned hands. Once he dashed full into a jagged tree stump, and he cursed loudly as he recoiled from the impact, but staggered on, his face streaming with blood, his skin horribly torn by the undergrowth. The night exacted its toll, and his bloodshot eyes strove ineffectually to pierce the gloom.

Suddenly, before him, there came a flash and a deafening roar, while in the trees behind a rain of buckshot scattered. He felt a slight, stinging pain in his shoulder, and instinctively he dropped like a log and lay motionless. The gun spoke again and again, spitting forth its leaden messengers of death, then the shooting stopped, and he dashed back whence he had come, forgetting for the moment the existence of the man who had first fired.

Knowing that he had missed, cursing himself for not having shot to kill, yet half glad that he had not so far forgotten his duty, the sheriff pursued doggedly.

He ran more carefully than the fugitive, and although he did not make as much speed, he managed, with the agency of the night's stillness, to keep on the track of his quarry. Sound carries far in the swamps, and he knew that the negro could not escape. Once he heard the ominous rattle which foretells Death, and he leaped nimbly to one side, jumping instinctively, in the nick of time, slipping and sliding in the ooze, his face bathed in cold perspiration.

Then came the roar of the shotgun; one of the stray buckshot ploughed through his shoulder, and he cursed softly as his own gun dropped, splashing, into the slime. In his left hand he clutched the revolver.

"Too late," he regretted; "the nigger's a goner!"

He heard the wild yell of terror and the subsequent crashing and splashing. He knew that the shells in the gun were exhausted, and he leaped to his feet, dashing toward the spot from whence the sound had come. The steps of another man sounded close by, running frantically in his direction; and he collided sickeningly, head-on, with a wild-eyed, black creature. Long, sinewy arms closed, vice-like, about his body, tentacle fashion, as they went down together.

And as they grappled the sheriff experienced a wild sense of primitive joy in knowing that he at last had in his hands that which he had sought.

Frenzied with the joy of the chase, the father pursued. He, too, ran wildly, and time and time again he was hurled from his feet by an invisible root, and many times he dashed full tilt into the spectral tree trunks.

He heard a wild yell, and then another; and then came the low, bubbling, gurgling cry of the trapped negro. There came to his ears an exultant shriek, demonaical in its expression of ferocious, bestial triumph; and with it a low-voiced curse in the sheriff's tones. The eyes of the father gleamed.

"God!" he said, "the she'iff's got im!"

He reached them, locked in death embrace, in the water, struggling like madmen amidst slime and mud and water. Above their labored breathing both were

cursing, with the deep-chested, fervent curses of fighting men.

Around them the frogs croaked on, unmindful of the import of the swamp-land drama being enacted before their protruding eyes; the mosquitoes took advantage of the death duel and lighted in swarms on the prostrate figures; far up in one of the squat swamp oaks an owl hooted despairingly, and with shining eyes looked down on the combat.

Hypnotized, the father watched the battle for a few seconds; then from his pocket he slowly drew a long, shiny knife; in his eyes the gleam of the chase had been supplanted by an exultant glare. The moon had risen to the full, and its rays forced their way through the moss-covered tops, lighting the stage with an unnatural, silvery glare.

The father approached, knife in one hand, revolver in the other. The latter he did not dare to use. In the dim light he could discern the terror-stricken face of the negro. The water was foamily turbulent, the green stagnancy intermixed with thin currents of sluggish red and a faint trace of soapy froth.

The negro found the sheriff's knife, and raised it to strike, and at the same instant the sheriff cried aloud and heaved upward with a last, Herculean effort. For a fleeting instant the negro paused, his hand upraised, gloating over the heaving man held powerless beneath his muscular body. In that moment the sheriff faced Death incarnate!

The one stolen second of triumph was fatal to the negro. There was a leap, a flash, a cry! The body of the victim stiffened; the unnatural expression which seamed his countenance gave way to one of unutterable surprise, and from his foam-flecked lips a dying stream of the vilest invective rolled. There was another flash and yet another, dimly reflected in the pale light, and the negro's body contracted, relaxed, and then splashed lifelessly into the water. His head struck against a root and rested there, while his ghastly, blood-smeared, grinning face, turned upward to the somber canopy of funereal gray moss.

The sheriff rose unsteadily to his feet. He faced the avenger, who had drawn his knife from the body and was calmly wiping it on his torn shirt. He gazed steadily at the sheriff.

"I tol' you I'd git 'im, She'iff," he said simply, "an' I done kep' my word!"

# The Joke

BY C. PFAHLER EDGAR

*That practical jokes often-times have unexpected and unpleasant endings is proven by this story of a joke played by a crowd of medical students on one of their number.*

I REMEMBER the six of us were sitting around the grate fire that evening—Walton, the boss engineer, Arnold, the superintendent, Biddle, the section gang boss, and the two Hawley brothers and myself. We were all H. & N. C. men, working near Kai-Fung, the main junction of the new line that the H. & N. C. people were throwing across north China; and, as practically all the laboring work was being done by natives, we six were the only English-speaking fellows on that end of the line.

We had been on this job for about eight weeks before we had reached Kai-Fung, and during this time we had all grown heartily sick of the miserable native beds and other accommodations; so, since we were to be at Kai-Fung three or four months doing the extra rail work that goes with a junction, the boss turned a gang of men, including ourselves, into cleaning and remodeling one of the best of the native huts for our quarters. A week's work had done wonders with the place, and then sending for for some real American beds and a lot of other stuff from back home, we had succeeded in making the shack surprisingly comfortable and almost homelike.

But of all the improvements we had made in it, the big rough stone fireplace was our one particular joy. On the cold nights of the long Chinese winter, we'd all gather up close to the blazing, crackling logs. And if we weren't all dead quiet, seeing in the dancing flames pictures of God's own country, where people shake hands when they meet and cheeks are pink instead of yellow—then we'd light up our pipes and tell tales, while the wind outside would rattle the windows and howl around the corners of the house.

There was one evening around that fireplace stands out from all the rest. It was one night in the beginning of winter and a wild storm was sweeping across the bleak country-side. The howling of the wind rose and fell in the blackness outside, and the sleet and snow beat against the window panes in a steady, pattering stream. Inside we had formed our usual half-circle in front of the fire, and the talk jumped from one topic to another until finally it turned to college pranks.

Bob, the younger Hawley brother, told how his crowd at college had once entered the room of an unpopular professor and had placed around the dark room, while the professor lay asleep in bed, a half-dozen tin pails stuffed with old newspapers. And how they had lighted the paper in each of the pails and slipped quietly out into the hall. And then, after hammering on the door and raising an awful uproar to awaken the professor, they had cut for their rooms to await results.

"You should have seen the prof. come out that door," chuckled Bob, wagging his head reminiscently from side to side,

as the delicious memory of it came back. "He thought the whole place was afire, and he tore down the hall in his pajamas, yelling at the top of his voice. He wound up in the street outside, and when they finally made out what he was hollering about and rushed to his room, they found nothing unusual there except the tin pails with a little black ash in the bottom of each.

"The whole thing worked like a charm, and, y' know," he added, "I've been thinking it over, and sometime I'm going to work the same thing on that heathen of a telegraph operator there." Bob referred to the new-school, educated Chinese operator who was mighty unpopular with our crowd.

"Lord!" he exclaimed with relish, "wouldn't I like to work it on him though, just to put some expression in that blank spot he uses for a face!"

After Bob had told his little story, Arnold spoke. Arnold was the superintendent who had just joined us. He was a middle-aged chap, very quiet and reserved. He spoke only when it was necessary, and then rather briefly. Not that he was a pessimist or a chronic grouch, but just a serious, rather solemn fellow who was getting grey around the temples a bit too early in life.

"Bob," he said, in his deep, slow voice, "I'll tell you a fellow ought to be very careful about playing those kind of jokes. Most of the time they turn out all right and nobody is the worse; but once in a while something slips up and then there's a tragedy."

"Oh, I say now," protested Bob, "everything would be all right. The fire would be in tin buckets and it couldn't spread, and besides, we'd be right there watching—nothing could go wrong."

"If you don't mind listening," said Arnold turning to us, "I'll tell you about one that did go wrong." We all assented and he commenced.

"I was a freshman in one of the big colleges back home when it happened. I was a medical student, studying to be a doctor.

"As you probably know, a medical student, after going through a certain amount of other work, is put at dissecting human bodies to gain an accurate and first-hand knowledge of the location and description of the different parts of the body.

"Our morgue, or 'dead room,' as we fellows called the place where these bodies were kept was a large cellar underneath the college hospital building. Down there marble-topped tables were put in rows and on each of these was placed a corpse, usually the unclaimed bodies at the city morgue.

"The bodies were laid on their backs and each was covered with a white rubber sheet. When you know that the room was silent as a tomb and was always artificially chilled, you can easily guess that is wasn't a very pleasant place to stay in.

"Well, three or four times a week, the medical class, with half a dozen professors, would go down in the 'dead room,' and start hacking away at those white, chilly bodies.

"I can tell you, most of us, and especially the first-year men, were always pretty well scared, although of course none ever admitted it. And, as usual, we new fellows came in for a lot of chaffing and jeering from the more seasoned meds—the fourth-year men and post-graduates and the like. While we'd never touch the corpse unless it was absolutely unavoidable, and then gingerly with our finger tips, these other fellows would grab them roughly by the hair and yank them around, rap their heads up and down on the tables and whack them loudly on the side of the face just to shock us first-year men. We used to look upon them as heartless, inhuman

brutes. And of course that made them jibe us all the more.

"There was one fellow in particular who used to rag us unmercifully if we got a little white around the gills, or if our hands trembled when the knife would grate on a bone in the search for some deep-hidden nerve. This fellow's name was Wisner. He was a senior, and consequently an old hand at dissecting. And he never let a chance go by to show up one of us freshies in front of the whole class. Naturally a fellow doesn't like to be made a laughing stock for a hundred students; but, even while we'd resent the kidding, we would always take it in good part and try to laugh it off.

"I remember during one session this senior picked out one of the freshmen, a fellow by the name of Cloud, and made him the butt of his kidding through the entire class-period. And again in the following session he took up his jeering at Cloud to raise a laugh from the rest of the class.

"Whenever the nearest professors were looking the other way, he'd give imitations of Cloud cutting the body. He would look at it in exaggerated fear, approach it cautiously, and touch it with his finger-tip, and then suddenly jump back as though frightened, and all that sort of foolishness, in imitation of Cloud. And it used to make a hit with the class, and the laugh was always on Cloud.

"Now this Cloud was a real young fellow and shy, even for a freshman, so he didn't say a word in reply to Wisner, although he knew it was being carried too far.

"Well, when that cession was over, Cloud went up to Wisner and said to him:

"'Say, you're such an awfully fearless hero, I'll bet you a ten-dollar bill you can't come down here tonight and stay in this room one hour—alone.'

"The senior laughed at first, but when Cloud put up his money he borrowed ten and covered it, and the money was given to a sophomore to hold. A dozen or so fellows were standing around and heard the bet made.

"At about seven o'clock that evening there was a small crowd of fellows, mostly freshmen, sitting in the hall at the top of the stairs leading down into the 'dead room.'

"A few minutes later Wisner came along, carrying a magazine under his arm and grinning contemptuously at the freshmen assembled there.

"'Where's Cloud, did he get cold feet?' he laughed in his mocking, rasping voice that always seemed to grate on a fellow's nerves the minute he opened his mouth.

"Bateman, the timekeeper and stakeholder, said Cloud had told him that he might not be able to get on hand with the rest, but to go ahead with the bet, that he'd show up before it was over.

"With his hand on the door knob, Wisner laughed at this excuse. He was feeling pretty good at the prospect of such easy money and could afford to laugh.

"'Afraid to show up for the killing,' he jeered, and then pulling the door open and slamming it after himself, he clattered down the stairs to the 'dead room.'

"At the bottom, he walked through the gloom to the nearest table and snapped on the light suspended just above it. Dragging a chair up to the table, and pushing the feet of the corpse aside to make room for his magazine, he leaned his chin on his hands and his elbows on the table, and commenced reading to kill time until Bateman should shout down the stairs that the time was up.

"In all the room, only the light directly above Wisner's head was burning, and the corners were filled with shadows.

The marble-topped tables, each with its sheet-covered corpse, stretched up and down the length of the room like rows of tombstones. The room was as still as death, and ghosts and all sorts of weird fancies seemed to lurk in the shadows and behind the tables. And Wisner sat there leaning over his magazine, reading under the glare of the electric light."

Arnold stopped abruptly. He was sitting forward in his chair and staring into the fire. His gaze shifted to the window—and for a long time he looked out at the black storm that was beating against the panes.

Suddenly he startled and glanced around at us as though he had forgotten our presence. Murmuring an apology, he continued:

"After the senior had been sitting there reading for about ten minutes, he heard a slight stirring behind him. Still leaning on his elbows above his magazine, he swung his head around.

"In the farthest corner of the room, where the light was dim, one of the corpses had raised the upper half of its body and remained propped up by its back-stretched arms, while, with its mouth drooping open and wide distended eyes, it stared vacantly at Wisner with a blank, unmeaning stare. That was what the senior saw through the half-darkness —that awful, dull-white naked corpse, with its trunk propped up at an angle and the sheet slipped down to its loins, as it sat there and regarded him silently and curiously.

"After gazing at the thing for a full half minute, the senior started up from his chair, knocking it over, and headed for the stairs. Before he had taken three steps, he threw his arm across his eyes, shrieked once, and pitched forward on his face."

Again Arnold stopped. I was sitting nearest him and I noticed his face. It was the grey-white color of ashes, and his hand trembled where it lay on the arm of his chair. We were all tense and excited, for the story, added to the mournful howling of the storm and the dying fire, quickened our pulse and made our breath come faster. I confess I threw a glance over my shoulder and edged closer to the fire. Without changing his position a hair, Arnold resumed:

"A couple of doctors were gotten down from the hospital and Wisner was brought up and put in bed.

"It came out later that Cloud had gone down alone into the 'dead room' before any of the others showed up, and had taken one of the bodies from its place on the table and concealed it in a vacant closet at one end of the room. Then, stripping off his clothes and whitening his entire body with flour, he lay on the table in place of the corpse. And with only his feet protruding from under the white rubber sheet, he had awaited the coming of the senior.

"When Wisner came to an hour later in the hospital cot, he was a gibbering lunatic.

"The matter was hushed up to a certain extent and Wisner was sent off to one of the best of the private asylums."

As Arnold paused, young Bob Hawley asked in an awed, scared whisper:

"Couldn't he be cured?"

"No," answered Arnold; "his form of insanity was one of the most incurable kind. He has been at the asylum for nine years and there hasn't been the slightest change, either for better or worse.

"He isn't at all violent and he very seldom speaks; and when he does, it's a meaningless jabber of medical terms, often mixed in with a string of college slang.

"His only irregularity is that he can't bear the sight of a naked or partly naked man.

"Once during his first weeks at the asylum, as he was walking down a hall, he saw through another bedroom door, a man naked to the waist with a sheet covering the lower half of his body, as he lay in bed propped up by pillows, while the doctor worked over hm.

"The convulsion that Wisner had right there in the hall nearly killed him.

"Even the sight of a man's arm bared to the shoulder will make him back away and stare at it in horror.

"Wisner had neither family nor money, and Cloud has been keeping him since he went to the asylum. Occasionally Cloud is obliged to go out and see him, and you can imagine the effect it has had on Cloud's life."

Here Arnold stopped. He leaned far forward in his chair and tapped his pipe on the hearth. His hand shook so the pipe nearly fell. Suddenly he rose and walked to the door leading out into the hall. In the doorway he stopped and faced us, and as I twisted around in my chair I could see his white face twitching as though in pain.

"One should be mighty careful about playing those kind of jokes. Sometimes they do turn out wrong and then somebody lives in hell forever."

He stopped short and looked at the floor as if he dreaded to go on. But he raised his eyes to us and spoke again in a dull, pain-weary voice.

"I know how it feels," he said. "Yes, I know. *I know.* I know because I'm Cloud."

*Then* I knew why his hand trembled and his face twitched.

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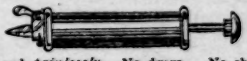

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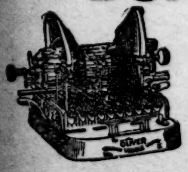

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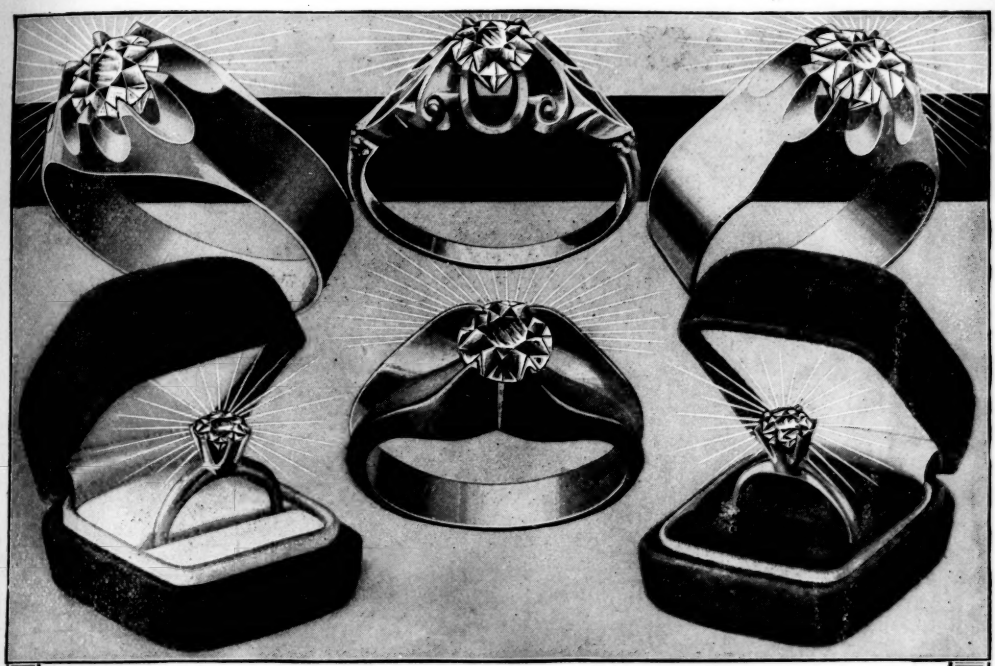

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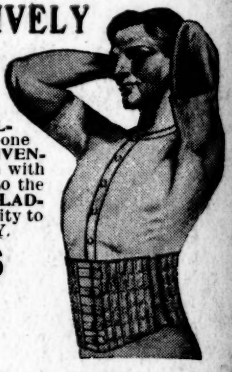

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through the swamp, straight toward the side from which he had entered. He ran by instinct, unreasoningly, filled with a mad desire to escape a known danger, and he plunged unthinkingly into the unknown. Hundreds of yards he ran, stirring the slimy water into an unwilling foam, then pausing to listen. The steps of his pursuer came relentlessly nearer, directly behind.

His countenance seamed with terror unutterable, he gasped painfully, clutching spasmodically at his heaving chest with both huge, horned hands. Once he dashed full into a jagged tree stump, and he cursed loudly as he recoiled from the impact, but staggered on, his face streaming with blood, his skin horribly torn by the undergrowth. The night exacted its toll, and his bloodshot eyes strove ineffectually to pierce the gloom.

Suddenly, before him, there came a flash and a deafening roar, while in the trees behind a rain of buckshot scattered. He felt a slight, stinging pain in his shoulder, and instinctively he dropped like a log and lay motionless. The gun spoke again and again, spitting forth its leaden messengers of death, then the shooting stopped, and he dashed back whence he had come, forgetting for the moment the existence of the man who had first fired.

Knowing that he had missed, cursing himself for not having shot to kill, yet half glad that he had not so far forgotten his duty, the sheriff pursued doggedly.

He ran more carefully than the fugitive, and although he did not make as much speed, he managed, with the agency of the night's stillness, to keep on the track of his quarry. Sound carries far in the swamps, and he knew that the negro could not escape. Once he heard the ominous rattle which foretells Death, and he leaped nimbly to one side, jumping instinctively, in the nick of time, slipping and sliding in the ooze, his face bathed in cold perspiration.

Then came the roar of the shotgun; one of the stray buckshot ploughed through his shoulder, and he cursed softly as his own gun dropped, splashing, into the slime. In his left hand he clutched the revolver.

"Too late," he regretted; "the nigger's a goner!"

He heard the wild yell of terror and the subsequent crashing and splashing. He knew that the shells in the gun were exhausted, and he leaped to his feet, dashing toward the spot from whence the sound had come. The steps of another man sounded close by, running frantically in his direction; and he collided sickeningly, head-on, with a wild-eyed, black creature. Long, sinewy arms closed, vice-like, about his body, tentacle fashion, as they went down together.

And as they grappled the sheriff experienced a wild sense of primitive joy in knowing that he at last had in his hands that which he had sought.

Frenzied with the joy of the chase, the father pursued. He, too, ran wildly, and time and time again he was hurled from his feet by an invisible root, and many times he dashed full tilt into the spectral tree trunks.

He heard a wild yell, and then another; and then came the low, bubbling, gurgling cry of the trapped negro. There came to his ears an exultant shriek, demonaical in its expression of ferocious, bestial triumph; and with it a low-voiced curse in the sheriff's tones. The eyes of the father gleamed.

"God!" he said, "the she'iff's got im!"

He reached them, locked in death embrace, in the water, struggling like madmen amidst slime and mud and water. Above their labored breathing both were

cursing, with the deep-chested, fervent curses of fighting men.

Around them the frogs croaked on, unmindful of the import of the swamp-land drama being enacted before their protruding eyes; the mosquitoes took advantage of the death duel and lighted in swarms on the prostrate figures; far up in one of the squat swamp oaks an owl hooted despairingly, and with shining eyes looked down on the combat.

Hypnotized, the father watched the battle for a few seconds; then from his pocket he slowly drew a long, shiny knife; in his eyes the gleam of the chase had been supplanted by an exultant glare. The moon had risen to the full, and its rays forced their way through the moss-covered tops, lighting the stage with an unnatural, silvery glare.

The father approached, knife in one hand, revolver in the other. The latter he did not dare to use. In the dim light he could discern the terror-stricken face of the negro. The water was foamily turbulent, the green stagnancy intermixed with thin currents of sluggish red and a faint trace of soapy froth.

The negro found the sheriff's knife, and raised it to strike, and at the same instant the sheriff cried aloud and heaved upward with a last, Herculean effort. For a fleeting instant the negro paused, his hand upraised, gloating over the heaving man held powerless beneath his muscular body. In that moment the sheriff faced Death incarnate!

The one stolen second of triumph was fatal to the negro. There was a leap, a flash, a cry! The body of the victim stiffened; the unnatural expression which seamed his countenance gave way to one of unutterable surprise, and from his foam-flecked lips a dying stream of the vilest invective rolled. There was another flash and yet another, dimly reflected in the pale light, and the negro's body contracted, relaxed, and then splashed lifelessly into the water. His head struck against a root and rested there, while his ghastly, blood-smeared, grinning face, turned upward to the somber canopy of funereal gray moss.

The sheriff rose unsteadily to his feet. He faced the avenger, who had drawn his knife from the body and was calmly wiping it on his torn shirt. He gazed steadily at the sheriff.

"I tol' you I'd git 'im, She'iff," he said simply, "an' I done kep' my word!"

# The Joke

BY C. PFAHLER EDGAR

*That practical jokes often-times have unexpected and unpleasant endings is proven by this story of a joke played by a crowd of medical students on one of their number.*

I REMEMBER the six of us were sitting around the grate fire that evening—Walton, the boss engineer, Arnold, the superintendent, Biddle, the section gang boss, and the two Hawley brothers and myself. We were all H. & N. C. men, working near Kai-Fung, the main junction of the new line that the H. & N. C. people were throwing across north China; and, as practically all the laboring work was being done by natives, we six were the only English-speaking fellows on that end of the line.

We had been on this job for about eight weeks before we had reached Kai-Fung, and during this time we had all grown heartily sick of the miserable native beds and other accommodations; so, since we were to be at Kai-Fung three or four months doing the extra rail work that goes with a junction, the boss turned a gang of men, including ourselves, into cleaning and remodeling one of the best of the native huts for our quarters. A week's work had done wonders with the place, and then sending for for some real American beds and a lot of other stuff from back home, we had succeeded in making the shack surprisingly comfortable and almost homelike.

But of all the improvements we had made in it, the big rough stone fireplace was our one particular joy. On the cold nights of the long Chinese winter, we'd all gather up close to the blazing, crackling logs. And if we weren't all dead quiet, seeing in the dancing flames pictures of God's own country, where people shake hands when they meet and cheeks are pink instead of yellow—then we'd light up our pipes and tell tales, while the wind outside would rattle the windows and howl around the corners of the house.

There was one evening around that fireplace stands out from all the rest. It was one night in the beginning of winter and a wild storm was sweeping across the bleak country-side. The howling of the wind rose and fell in the blackness outside, and the sleet and snow beat against the window panes in a steady, pattering stream. Inside we had formed our usual half-circle in front of the fire, and the talk jumped from one topic to another until finally it turned to college pranks.

Bob, the younger Hawley brother, told how his crowd at college had once entered the room of an unpopular professor and had placed around the dark room, while the professor lay asleep in bed, a half-dozen tin pails stuffed with old newspapers. And how they had lighted the paper in each of the pails and slipped quietly out into the hall. And then, after hammering on the door and raising an awful uproar to awaken the professor, they had cut for their rooms to await results.

"You should have seen the prof. come out that door," chuckled Bob, wagging his head reminiscently from side to side,

as the delicious memory of it came back. "He thought the whole place was afire, and he tore down the hall in his pajamas, yelling at the top of his voice. He wound up in the street outside, and when they finally made out what he was hollering about and rushed to his room, they found nothing unusual there except the tin pails with a little black ash in the bottom of each.

"The whole thing worked like a charm, and, y' know," he added, "I've been thinking it over, and sometime I'm going to work the same thing on that heathen of a telegraph operator there." Bob referred to the new-school, educated Chinese operator who was mighty unpopular with our crowd.

"Lord!" he exclaimed with relish, "wouldn't I like to work it on him though, just to put some expression in that blank spot he uses for a face!"

After Bob had told his little story, Arnold spoke. Arnold was the superintendent who had just joined us. He was a middle-aged chap, very quiet and reserved. He spoke only when it was necessary, and then rather briefly. Not that he was a pessimist or a chronic grouch, but just a serious, rather solemn fellow who was getting grey around the temples a bit too early in life.

"Bob," he said, in his deep, slow voice, "I'll tell you a fellow ought to be very careful about playing those kind of jokes. Most of the time they turn out all right and nobody is the worse; but once in a while something slips up and then there's a tragedy."

"Oh, I say now," protested Bob, "everything would be all right. The fire would be in tin buckets and it couldn't spread, and besides, we'd be right there watching—nothing could go wrong."

"If you don't mind listening," said Arnold turning to us, "I'll tell you about one that did go wrong." We all assented and he commenced.

"I was a freshman in one of the big colleges back home when it happened. I was a medical student, studying to be a doctor.

"As you probably know, a medical student, after going through a certain amount of other work, is put at dissecting human bodies to gain an accurate and first-hand knowledge of the location and description of the different parts of the body.

"Our morgue, or 'dead room,' as we fellows called the place where these bodies were kept was a large cellar underneath the college hospital building. Down there marble-topped tables were put in rows and on each of these was placed a corpse, usually the unclaimed bodies at the city morgue.

"The bodies were laid on their backs and each was covered with a white rubber sheet. When you know that the room was silent as a tomb and was always artificially chilled, you can easily guess that is wasn't a very pleasant place to stay in.

"Well, three or four times a week, the medical class, with half a dozen professors, would go down in the 'dead room,' and start hacking away at those white, chilly bodies.

"I can tell you, most of us, and especially the first-year men, were always pretty well scared, although of course none ever admitted it. And, as usual, we new fellows came in for a lot of chaffing and jeering from the more seasoned meds—the fourth-year men and post-graduates and the like. While we'd never touch the corpse unless it was absolutely unavoidable, and then gingerly with our finger tips, these other fellows would grab them roughly by the hair and yank them around, rap their heads up and down on the tables and whack them loudly on the side of the face just to shock us first-year men. We used to look upon them as heartless, inhuman

brutes. And of course that made them jibe us all the more.

"There was one fellow in particular who used to rag us unmercifully if we got a little white around the gills, or if our hands trembled when the knife would grate on a bone in the search for some deep-hidden nerve. This fellow's name was Wisner. He was a senior, and consequently an old hand at dissecting. And he never let a chance go by to show up one of us freshies in front of the whole class. Naturally a fellow doesn't like to be made a laughing stock for a hundred students; but, even while we'd resent the kidding, we would always take it in good part and try to laugh it off.

"I remember during one session this senior picked out one of the freshmen, a fellow by the name of Cloud, and made him the butt of his kidding through the entire class-period. And again in the following session he took up his jeering at Cloud to raise a laugh from the rest of the class.

"Whenever the nearest professors were looking the other way, he'd give imitations of Cloud cutting the body. He would look at it in exaggerated fear, approach it cautiously, and touch it with his finger-tip, and then suddenly jump back as though frightened, and all that sort of foolishness, in imitation of Cloud. And it used to make a hit with the class, and the laugh was always on Cloud.

"Now this Cloud was a real young fellow and shy, even for a freshman, so he didn't say a word in reply to Wisner, although he knew it was being carried too far.

"Well, when that cession was over, Cloud went up to Wisner and said to him:

"'Say, you're such an awfully fearless hero, I'll bet you a ten-dollar bill you can't come down here tonight and stay in this room one hour—alone.'

"The senior laughed at first, but when Cloud put up his money he borrowed ten and covered it, and the money was given to a sophomore to hold. A dozen or so fellows were standing around and heard the bet made.

"At about seven o'clock that evening there was a small crowd of fellows, mostly freshmen, sitting in the hall at the top of the stairs leading down into the 'dead room.'

"A few minutes later Wisner came along, carrying a magazine under his arm and grinning contemptuously at the freshmen assembled there.

"'Where's Cloud, did he get cold feet?' he laughed in his mocking, rasping voice that always seemed to grate on a fellow's nerves the minute he opened his mouth.

"Bateman, the timekeeper and stakeholder, said Cloud had told him that he might not be able to get on hand with the rest, but to go ahead with the bet, that he'd show up before it was over.

"With his hand on the door knob, Wisner laughed at this excuse. He was feeling pretty good at the prospect of such easy money and could afford to laugh.

"'Afraid to show up for the killing,' he jeered, and then pulling the door open and slamming it after himself, he clattered down the stairs to the 'dead room.'

"At the bottom, he walked through the gloom to the nearest table and snapped on the light suspended just above it. Dragging a chair up to the table, and pushing the feet of the corpse aside to make room for his magazine, he leaned his chin on his hands and his elbows on the table, and commenced reading to kill time until Bateman should shout down the stairs that the time was up.

"In all the room, only the light directly above Wisner's head was burning, and the corners were filled with shadows.

The marble-topped tables, each with its sheet-covered corpse, stretched up and down the length of the room like rows of tombstones. The room was as still as death, and ghosts and all sorts of weird fancies seemed to lurk in the shadows and behind the tables. And Wisner sat there leaning over his magazine, reading under the glare of the electric light."

Arnold stopped abruptly. He was sitting forward in his chair and staring into the fire. His gaze shifted to the window—and for a long time he looked out at the black storm that was beating against the panes.

Suddenly he startled and glanced around at us as though he had forgotten our presence. Murmuring an apology, he continued:

"After the senior had been sitting there reading for about ten minutes, he heard a slight stirring behind him. Still leaning on his elbows above his magazine, he swung his head around.

"In the farthest corner of the room, where the light was dim, one of the corpses had raised the upper half of its body and remained propped up by its back-stretched arms, while, with its mouth drooping open and wide distended eyes, it stared vacantly at Wisner with a blank, unmeaning stare. That was what the senior saw through the half-darkness —that awful, dull-white naked corpse, with its trunk propped up at an angle and the sheet slipped down to its loins, as it sat there and regarded him silently and curiously.

"After gazing at the thing for a full half minute, the senior started up from his chair, knocking it over, and headed for the stairs. Before he had taken three steps, he threw his arm across his eyes, shrieked once, and pitched forward on his face."

Again Arnold stopped. I was sitting nearest him and I noticed his face. It was the grey-white color of ashes, and his hand trembled where it lay on the arm of his chair. We were all tense and excited, for the story, added to the mournful howling of the storm and the dying fire, quickened our pulse and made our breath come faster. I confess I threw a glance over my shoulder and edged closer to the fire. Without changing his position a hair, Arnold resumed:

"A couple of doctors were gotten down from the hospital and Wisner was brought up and put in bed.

"It came out later that Cloud had gone down alone into the 'dead room' before any of the others showed up, and had taken one of the bodies from its place on the table and concealed it in a vacant closet at one end of the room. Then, stripping off his clothes and whitening his entire body with flour, he lay on the table in place of the corpse. And with only his feet protruding from under the white rubber sheet, he had awaited the coming of the senior.

"When Wisner came to an hour later in the hospital cot, he was a gibbering lunatic.

"The matter was hushed up to a certain extent and Wisner was sent off to one of the best of the private asylums."

As Arnold paused, young Bob Hawley asked in an awed, scared whisper:

"Couldn't he be cured?"

"No," answered Arnold; "his form of insanity was one of the most incurable kind. He has been at the asylum for nine years and there hasn't been the slightest change, either for better or worse.

"He isn't at all violent and he very seldom speaks; and when he does, it's a meaningless jabber of medical terms, often mixed in with a string of college slang.

"His only irregularity is that he can't bear the sight of a naked or partly naked man.

"Once during his first weeks at the asylum, as he was walking down a hall, he saw through another bedroom door, a man naked to the waist with a sheet covering the lower half of his body, as he lay in bed propped up by pillows, while the doctor worked over hm.

"The convulsion that Wisner had right there in the hall nearly killed him.

"Even the sight of a man's arm bared to the shoulder will make him back away and stare at it in horror.

"Wisner had neither family nor money, and Cloud has been keeping him since he went to the asylum. Occasionally Cloud is obliged to go out and see him, and you can imagine the effect it has had on Cloud's life."

Here Arnold stopped. He leaned far forward in his chair and tapped his pipe on the hearth. His hand shook so the pipe nearly fell. Suddenly he rose and walked to the door leading out into the hall. In the doorway he stopped and faced us, and as I twisted around in my chair I could see his white face twitching as though in pain.

"One should be mighty careful about playing those kind of jokes. Sometimes they do turn out wrong and then somebody lives in hell forever."

He stopped short and looked at the floor as if he dreaded to go on. But he raised his eyes to us and spoke again in a dull, pain-weary voice.

"I know how it feels," he said. "Yes, I know. *I know.* I know because I'm Cloud."

*Then* I knew why his hand trembled and his face twitched.

The Black Cat

# Up From the Sea

BY NORVELL O. TINKER

*This is a truly remarkable story of the underworld. "Rags," a fence for thieves, whose sole redeeming trait is his loyalty, exacts a shocking penalty for the death of a woman of his world who befriended him.*

AS the great clock in the tower of Saint Edward's Cathedral boomed upon the night air, its three solemn, measured strokes, a cloud, floating idly by, allowed the light of the full moon to sift through the single grimy window of the garret where Rags lay sleeping. Its pallid rays descended upon the bed, bringing into ghostly relief that colorless face with its wide, thick-lipped mouth; flat, bridgeless nose; huge ears that spurned the skull from which they sprang; and a snarl of coarse red hair growing far forward on the low retreating forehead.

As the light rested on his face, the sleeper stirred uneasily, woke with a start, then sat bolt upright. The dull pale-blue eyes blinked stupidly, then stared with superstitious fear, into the dark corners of his garret. He had often heard that sleeping in the moonlight presaged the coming of death, so, hastily shifting himself to the shadowy portion of the bed, he sat in shivering dread of some impending evil.

Suddenly the silence of the house was broken by a low, bubbling moan. Beads of perspiration stood on his forehead; he shook with an ague of fear. The uncanny sound was repeated, and it slowly penetrated the dull brain that it came from the room below where Mag slept.

Ever since that night, five years ago, when "Handsome Mag" had rescued him, numb with cold and hunger, from the doorstoop of the Bleecker Street house, he had been the willing slave of this handsome, dashing woman of the criminal world. She had taken him in, fed and clothed him, and made him a member of that band of expert diamond thieves, of which she was the leader, and whose operations had puzzled the New York detective bureau for ten years.

Often the patched clothing of Rags concealed thousands of dollars worth of gems, while detectives sought in vain for evidence among the prosperous appearing individuals of the world of thievery. It was Rags's duty to carry the "swag" until the keenness of the chase abated. His evident low order of intelligence and stupid expression were his best safeguards; for what officer would waste time searching for diamonds on a brute

whose mentality was little higher than that of an ape?

Rags's one pre-eminent characteristic was loyalty to his benefactress. Her word was a law he obeyed to the letter, regardless of consequences. Her cuffs and curses he bore without complaint; while a smile, a kind word, an encouraging look, made his heart glow with pleasure. He worshipped her as a dumb brute its master—willing at all times to sacrifice his life in her defense. So now, the thought that she had come to harm thrilled him as nothing else could do. Gone were his fears of the moonlight, and the evil things that lurked in the shadows of his garret. His brain held only one thought—the avenging of any injury done to his idol.

Thrusting a hand under his pillow, he drew forth a long, tapering knife, and stepping lightly to the floor, stole out of the garret and down the stairs with the stealth of an Indian. He paused at the door below and listened intently. From within came again that low, gurgling moan.

Without further hesitation, Rags pushed open the door and stood transfixed with horror. Upon the floor, in the moonlight, lay "Handsome Mag," the bosom of her nightdress stained with blood. Dropping his knife, Rags rushed to the side of the woman.

"Who done it, Mag?" he cried hoarsely.

There was no reply, and Rags, wild with fear, dashed to the table, poured out a glass of whiskey and forced some of it down Mag's throat. With a choking cough, the woman roused from her stupor, and languidly opened her eyes.

"Is—that—you—Rags?" she asked haltingly.

"Yes, it's me," he answered. "Who done it, Mag?"

The woman's lips moved feebly, and Rags bent low to catch the words: "Jerry—stabbed me—in the breast—and—swiped the swag. I'm —a goner."

"Naw, you ain't," he protested, seizing the glass of whiskey and holding it to her mouth. The woman closed her lips and pushed it away.

"It's no use. I—know."

For a moment she was silent, then the black eyes opened, gleaming with hate.

"Rags—promise me—you'll get him."

"I promise," he answered harshly.

"Hold up—your right hand—and swear it," she commanded.

Rags held high his long, bony hand, and the tears on his cheeks glittered in the moonlight as he lifted up his face and swore in a voice choked with grief and anger: "I swear to kill him —so help me God—if I die a-doin' it."

A smile of satisfaction curved the beautiful lips. "Good—old—Rags," she murmured.

Her respirations grew so short, the movements of her chest so slight, she seemed scarcely to breath at all.

Suddenly the black eyes flew open wide; she raised herself upon one elbow and pointing into the darkness, cried: "Jerry—I'll be waiting—for you—in Hell."

There was a thud on the floor, and the stained soul of "Handsome Mag" had gone to its judgment.

For five minutes Rags sat motionless, stunned into inactivity by the magnitude of the blow. He was aroused by a faint sound behind him, and turning his head, saw Jerry stealing upon him with upraised arm. Rags sprang for his knife—but too late. The loaded club descended upon his forehead with a dull, sickening sound; his arms fell to his sides; he swayed drunkenly for a moment; then fell with a crash across the body of the woman.

Rags opened his eyes in absolute darkness and silence—not a ray of light greeted his vision; not a sound, his listening ear. He shivered with cold, and his head ached frightfully. When he attempted to raise his hand, it came into abrupt contact with some hard substance immediately above him. Feeling to the sides and beneath him, his groping fingers encountered other boards. He seemed to be in some kind of a wooden box that just fitted his body. By moving his feet and hands around, he found it narrower at both ends than in the middle. This puzzled him. Narrowed at both ends! Why, that was like a coffin! His groping fingers stopped abruptly, and he lay still. The darkness, the silence, the cold, and this coffin-shaped box, could mean only one thing—he was buried! The police had evidently found him apparently dead, and the public undertaker had hurried his body to the potter's field.

Buried alive! The fearful thought pierced his brain like a knife. A scream of horror burst from his lips; he jerked himself up; his head came into violent contact with the top of his prison, and he fell back, stunned by the blow. Frantically he beat the immovable walls of his coffin with feet and fists, alternately calling for help, cursing and trying to pray. Streams of perspiration poured from his body; the air grew stifling; the muscles of his chest strained themselves to the utmost in search of life-giving oxygen; he knew he was dying—smothering to death. A frenzy of rebellion seized him; he kicked furiously, tore at the wooden barriers with bleeding fingers, and cursed with all the foul oaths his companions had taught him; then, sinking back exhausted, merciful oblivion claimed him.

How long he remained unconscious, he did not know. His first sensation was that of a draught of air blowing on his face. It was musty air, rank with the stench of decaying vegetation, yet Rags's thirsty lungs drank it in great gulps. The bluish tinge of suffocation left his lips and fingers, the reviving heart again pumped blood to the stupid brain, and Rags slowly opened his eyes. For a moment he lay still, staring with wide eyes into the impenetrable blackness; then the silence of his narrow chamber was rent by peal upon peal of ghoulish laughter.

Something had snapped in poor Rags's brain and he was mad! mad! He mumbled incoherently to himself, talked with imaginary companions, beat his feet against the boards of his prison, and laughed in maniacal glee. He discovered he could not strike the foot of his coffin with his feet and it aroused within him a child-

ish anger. Sliding toward the foot of the box till his knees were bent as much as the narrow space would admit, he kicked viciously at the foot board, and paused in surprise as both feet plunged through a hole.

This discovery excited his curiosity and awakened in his disordered brain, the instinct of self-preservation. Ceasing for a time his mad ravings, he hitched himself along till finally his whole body slipped through the opening and he slid downward into three feet of mud and slime. He seemed to be standing in a tunnel, long forgotten and half filled with mud and weeds. Some distance away, he perceived a faint light and started toward it. As he floundered forward through the oozy substance, muttering and laughing in his madness, he reached out to steady himself, and something smooth and clammy glided from out of his grasp. He seized the reptile by its tail and flung it violently against the side of the tunnel as he shrieked:

"I got you that time, Jerry!"

When an army of fierce rats pressed around him, eager for a feast, he pelted them with handfuls of mud; and as they ran squeaking in fear, the tunnel reverberated with his shouts of laughter.

At last he stood at the mouth of the underground passage, and gazed on the softly-sobbing, moonlit waters of the sea. Turning, he saw a fisherman bailing water from a boat drawn upon the beach; and Rags, after a moment's speculative survey of the scene, ran swiftly toward him.

The fisherman, hearing the crunch of gravel under his feet, turned his head and gave one startled glance at the rapidly advancing figure dressed in burial clothes and covered with the filth and slime of the tunnel; then, dropping his tin bucket, he fled precipitately up the beach, calling on all the saints for protection.

Without paying any attention to the frightened man, Rags pushed the boat into the water, sprang in, and seizing the oars, rowed madly out to sea, while curses, snatches of ribald songs and shouts of demon laughter echoed across the water as he disappeared from sight.

Far out in the bay, a huge vessel, agleam with lights, bore down upon him, but Rags either did not see it or his disordered brain was unable to comprehend the danger. There came a crash; the frail boat was crushed to splinters, and Rags was in the water, battling desperately with the waves. Some negligent sailor had left a rope trailing over the stern of the vessel. It touched Rags's hand; instinctively he clutched it and drew his head out of water.

Among the crowd of passengers aboard the new American Line steamer *Magnificent,* on her maiden voyage to Havre, was a couple registered as Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Angelus of Boston. The woman was of the small blonde type, with a clear complexion, and eyes blue and guileless as those of a child. The man was a tall, handsome, well-groomed person, who radiated an air of wealth and refinement. Both were quiet in dress and manner. The one distinguishing feature of Mr. Vincent Angelus was his eyes. These were steely gray, and so cold in ex-

pression that when you met his gaze, the chilling effect of it lingered in your memory, and you found yourself wondering if such a man could really possess a soul.

By the time the *Magnificent* reached the lower bay, night had come, and on the great ship all was light and laughter. From the ballroom floated the strains of orchestral music accompanied by the tread of many dancing feet, while groups of passengers dotted the decks or strolled around for exercise.

On the forward part of the main deck, an admiring audience surrounded a tanned, grizzled veteran of the sea. A pretty young girl leaned eagerly forward.

"Please tell us another story, Mr. Waters—a real creepy, shivery one."

The big mate laughed indulgently.

"Bosh!" exclaimed a dyspeptic-looking individual, "I never took any stock in these cock-and-bull mystery tales of the sea. They're simply sailor yarns spun for the entertainment of the credulous. Don't you think so, Mr. Waters?"

The mate's face sobered as he answered slowly: "I can't agree with you, sir. Even allowing that sailors are possessed of an unusual degree of superstition and imagination, I contend that there still remain numbers of mysterious, uncanny happenings at sea for which no satisfactory explanation can be offered. I'll mention a case in point.

"Nearly twenty years ago, when I was younger and more reckless than now, I was captain of a three-masted schooner engaged in the Chinese opium trade. One day we were lying in the harbor of Hongkong, when a Frenchman came aboard and asked for passage. We never carried passengers and I was about to send the fellow on his way in short order, when he shook a roll of big yellow bills under my nose.

"Well, business hadn't been very good, and I needed the money. Consequently I pocketed his roll, and put him in the mate's quarters. He was a little fellow, quick and nervous in manner, and I took a dislike to him from the beginning. I couldn't figure out why a man with money preferred a slow, pitching, rolling schooner to a comfortable steamer, unless to escape detection for some crime. However, it was none of my business to inquire into his past and, as I had been well paid for his passage, I let it go at that.

"We sailed that night, and for three days everything went well; then the wind died out, and we were becalmed. The inactivity seemed to affect my passenger strangely. He lost his appetite, became restless and irritable, and several times I caught him muttering to himself. On the fifth day of the calm, the Frenchman acted so queerly, I tolled off a sailor to keep an eye on him. That night it was warm and moonlight, just as it is tonight, with enough fog to give everything a ghostly, unnatural appearance. About ten o'clock the Frenchman was up forward, muttering to himself, and growing more excited every minute. The sailor stood nearby, coiling a rope, and keeping a wary eye on him. On a sudden the Frenchman stopped abruptly and stared into the fog, his face pasty

white with fear. "'Keep him off! Keep him off!' he screamed.

"As he ran past, the sailor caught him and shook him roughly.

"'Shut up, you little shrimp!' he said, 'there's nothing after you.'

"'Keep him off!' cried the Frenchman, struggling to release himself.

"'Keep who off?' questioned the sailor.

"'Francois!' shrieked the frightened man. "'*Mon Dieu,* there he comes!'

"With a jerk he tore himself loose from the sailor's grasp, and, before anyone could stop him, sprang over the rail, into the sea."

The mate paused a moment, then continued: "I heard afterward that his name was Jules Mareau, and that he had murdered and robbed his pardner, Francois."

"Bah!" scoffed the dyspeptic one, "that was only the effect of a guilty conscience."

"Do—do you think he really saw anything?" asked the girl, in awed tones.

The mate shrugged his big shoulders as he rose. "Who can say what the eyes of a murderer may see?"

As the group dispersed, Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Angelus strolled toward the stern of the vessel and took possession of a couple of deserted deck chairs. After glancing about uneasily, Mrs. Angelus whispered to her companion:

"I wish I hadn't heard that story, Jerry. It's made me dreadfully nervous."

The man laughed lightly. "The sight of Slippery Kate with a case of nerves is something new under the sun. And while I think of it, allow me to remind you that I am now Vincent Angelus."

The woman spoke again. "You don't suppose he told it for the purpose of seeing if it had any effect—that is, he has any suspicions—"

"Of course not," he interrupted sharply.

Mrs. Angelus sighed heavily. "I don't know what's the matter with me, but I have a presentiment that something is going wrong; I can feel it."

Mr. Angelus frowned, and for the fraction of a second the steely eyes wavered; then he yawned and smiled. "Got a hunch, eh? Well, forget it. I saw both Mag and Rags planted in potter's field on Pauper Island—we passed it an hour back. Take my word for it, they're there to stay; this seeing people after they're dead is all moonshine. Now run along and get some sleep; you'll feel better in the morning."

Drawing a buckskin bag from his pocket, he held it out to her. "Take these sparklers with you and have a look at them. They're worth three hundred thousand; the sight of them ought to cheer you up considerably."

The woman shrank back with a shudder. "No, no, you keep them, Jerry. I'll look at them tomorrow," she replied hastily.

"Just as you say," he returned, dropping the bag carelessly into his pocket. "I'll sit here and smoke a bit before turning in."

He gazed after her retreating figure till it disappeared, then a faint smile curved his thin lips.

"If she keeps up this confounded

nonsense, I'll have to get rid of her," he remarked coolly. Carefully selecting a cigar from a well-filled case, he clipped the end and felt in his pockets for a match. At that instant there came a shrill blast from the steamer's whistle. The cigar dropped from his hand and rolled along the deck. He recovered it and ignited the end with a match that wavered slightly with the unsteadiness of his hand.

"Damn Kate's hunch," he muttered savagely, "it's affected my nerves."

The music and dancing had ceased. The deck was deserted; one by one the staterooms were darkened; a noiseless-footed sailor appeared suddenly, and as quickly was gone; the great ship moved silently through the stillness of the night. The heart of the murderer quailed before his insignificance in the presence of the mighty and mysterious forces of nature. For the first time in his wicked life his nerves of steel were weakening—he was afraid of something, he knew not what; he felt as if some uncanny, irresistible force were stealing upon him from out of the darkness.

With an effort he wrenched himself from this stifling depression. His mind flashed to the fortune in jewels which lay in his pocket. Three hundred thousand dollars' worth—enough to support him in luxury the remainder of his life. With a smile of content, he leaned back in his chair and conjured up visions of a life of idleness and ease.

Lulled into drowsiness by the balmy air and the motion of the ship, his eyes slowly closed; the cigar slipped from his relaxed fingers, and he slept and dreamed.

And in that dream he saw Rags standing over him—bloody and menacing. He awoke with a start; sprang to his feet in terror; turned toward the sea; and was immediately frozen into immobility by seeing two big, bony hands clutch the rail, and the face of Rags—wet, pallid, ghostly in the moonlight—rise all dripping from the sea. They stared at each other for a moment; then a diabolical grin twisted the mouth of the apparition, and a hoarse voice whispered:

"Come, Jerry. Mag's waitin' for you in Hell."

With a scream of fear, the murderer struck at the ghastly thing and missed; then ten long, clammy fingers encircled his throat; he was jerked over the rail; and a shriek of maniacal laughter split the air as two bodies splashed beneath the waves.

# Sold for Beans

BY WILLIAM TILLINGHAST ELDRIDGE

*We can imagine old David Harum chuckling over this Yankee horse-deal, where a sly old horse-fancier got the "double-cross" in a deal that he expected to get something for nothing.*

EANS?" questioned Deacon Brown.

"Beans," nodded Si Burns, in agreement.

The deacon stroked his white whiskers meditatively and eyed Mr. Burns's cherubic face. Mr. Burns, trader in all things where a dollar was likely to change hands to Mr. Burns's advantage, was known, at times, to have a penchant for practical jokes.

Deacon Brown was a very sedate person and never, knowingly, walked into a situation which would result in his being made to appear ridiculous.

Yet this offer to part with a good horse, over which there had been a dispute as to weight, appeared filled with doubtful proportions.

"You said 'beans'?" mused the deacon, eying the placid beast.

Si rubbed his round red cheek. "Beans, Deacon," he admitted. "Of course you may be able ter pick the heft of a horse; I ain't sayin' you ain't. You cal'late she'll touch eleven sixty and quit right thar."

"She won't go a mite over eleven seventy," snapped the deacon, a trifle inclined to resent the insinuation that he could be mistaken.

"You be climbing, Deacon—eleven seventy."

"He's gettin' ready ter hedge," chirruped little Mr. Betts, who had wandered out from behind the notion counter of his store into the warm sunshine and closer proximity to the argument.

The shrill voice, intended to be a whisper, did not fail to reach Deacon Brown's sharp ears, and he flushed the least bit.

"Eleven sixty," he snapped. "I said it, and I stand by it."

"Then," smiled Mr. Burns, "I cal'late she'll go more. And I'm so sot on thinkin' I can guess the heft of a horse that I'll take beans fur her."

Perplexity filled the watery eyes of the pillar of the church.

"It's a queer way ter sell," he muttered.

"Wall," suggested Mr. Burns, "you ain't obliged to buy."

But the deacon was anxious to buy. As much as he feared traps—and many had been set for him—still he believed he could endure the risk of being made to look ridiculous if he might buy a horse and pay in beans.

"How'd yer put it, Si?" he inquired.

"You say she'll go eleven sixty. If she goes eleven sixty-one you get the mare, and I get one bean."

With the deacon's nod, there came a gasp from the encircling villagers. Mr. Betts looked at Mr. Jones; Mr.

Simpling, the hardware man, regarded Mr. Cutler, the fishmonger; others, with dubious headshakes turned, wide-eyed, upon their neighbors.

Si Burns was the last man to be thought of as a fool. But this proposition!

"If she goes better'n sixty-one?" frowned the deacon.

"If she goes eleven sixty-two you get the mare and I get two beans—two pounds better'n you say, and the bean fer the fust pound doubled."

"Yes," agreed the deacon, growing eager.

"If she goes one pound better still you pay four beans."

"And if she goes sixty-four?".

"Eight beans. Sixteen if she goes sixty-five."

"You ain't trying to sell me no balker?" demanded the deacon, facing Mr. Burns suddenly.

"You have tried her," answered Mr. Burns.

The deacon nodded and pondered. Then he thrust his hands deep into his pockets and drew a sigh as his eyes considered the prize, as good as his. "Si Burns," he proposed, "I ain't but wonderin' if you be gone plum daffy, but I'll take yer."

"Yer church says something about being yer brother's keeper," suggested Mr. Burns, the merest smile touching the corners of his eyes.

In solemn conclave the deacon and Mr. Burns, the mare following, the village in attendance, proceeded to the scales.

Mr. Betts officiated, nicely balanced the bar—feeling the importance of the occasion—and the mare was led onto the platform.

"Twelve hundred—jest," announced the owner of the dry goods store.

The deacon's face broadened into one expansive smile. It was not so much of a disgrace to miss by the mere matter of forty pounds when, to offset what little chagrin he might feel, came the ownership of a good horse for a few beans.

"Wall, Si," he chuckled, "you can seize 'em up fur heft. But I ain't kickin' at yer havin' the better on me thar. I'll fetch down yer sixty beans next time I drive in."

"How many?" mused Mr. Burns.

"Sixty?" questioned the deacon.

"One fur the fust," mused Mr. Burns, two fur the second, four fur the third, eight fur the fourth. Then sixteen fur the fifth, and thirty-two fur the sixth. Goin' on, as was to be the way, sixty-four fur the seventh, one hundred and twenty-eight fur—"

"Oh, wall," broke in the deacon," "I'll make it 'er bushel, Si, and that will be a mite more than's comin' to yer by rights."

"Suppose we see on that," suggested Mr. Burns. "Mr. Betts, can we use your store fur a moment?"

Gladly, Mr. Betts offered accommodations for the settlement of a question which seemed to have greater possibilities than any of the attending crowd fancied.

With paper and pencil Mr. Burns bent over the cleared counter. "Jim," he suggested, figuring slowly, "will yer go in and git a quart of beans from Tibbins?"

With the return of the messenger,

Mr. Tibbins in his wake, and all of Mr. Tibbins's customers, Mr. Burns dumped the beans upon the counter.

"Count 'em, Betts, and cast out the broken one," and he went back to his figures.

The deacon, resting one foot and then the other, held silent as long as possible.

"What in tarnation, Si, be you countin' a quart of beans fur? I'll make it two bushels, and I cal'late then you'll be gettin' more'n you should have comin' ter yer."

"So," mused Mr. Burns; "wall we'll see," and he went on with his growing column of figures.

He was through with his task before the quart of beans was counted, and meditatively his cigar turned from corner to corner of his mouth as he watched the flies on the screen door.

At last, Mr. Betts drew a sigh. "I ain't sayin' I'm jest right," he admitted, mopping his brow, "but them are in piles of one hundred, and I makes it three thousand, four hundred and sixty-two beans in a quart."

Mr. Burns nodded. "If the deacon ain't objectin'," he suggested, "we'll call it even three thousand and four hundred."

"Si Burns," thundered the deacon, "what has the number of beans in a quart got ter do with this thin'?"

Mr. Burns glanced up from his paper to which he had been adding more figures.

"It means, deacon, that thar be one hundred and eight thousand, eight hundred beans in a bushel," he announced.

"Wall, I ain't sayin' thar ben't, am I?" snapped the deacon.

"Which being the case," went on Mr Burns placidly, "it means that you owe me jest about five million bushels of beans fur that thar mare."

The deacon got his mouth open and his eyes, but no sound escaped from him for a long moment. With him was the audience, agape.

"What?" suddenly roared the deacon.

"It was one fur the fust, two fur the second, and so on, doublin' each pound," explained Mr. Burns, patiently.

"At twenty pounds it comes ter five hundred and four thousand, two hundred and eighty-eight beans, less I've made some slip. Fur the twenty-fust pound over eleven sixty it be double that number which—"

"Nothing of the sort," roared the deacon.

Mr. Burns held forth his paper, and the deacon grabbed it.

With the aid of all who could get within sight, Mr. Burns's figures were gone over. Suddenly, the deacon threw the paper on the counter.

"At two fifty a bushel fur beans, Deacon, that thar mare stands you jest about twelve million dollars," suggested Mr. Burns.

"You go to——Jim jickey," thundered the deacon, and went out the screen door, startling every fly on the wire.

"Say, Si," inquired a breathless voice from the door, "what do yer suppose the deacon will do? He left the mare."

"I cal'late," mused Mr. Burns, "the deacon will jest as soon pay the figure I sot on her when he fust took

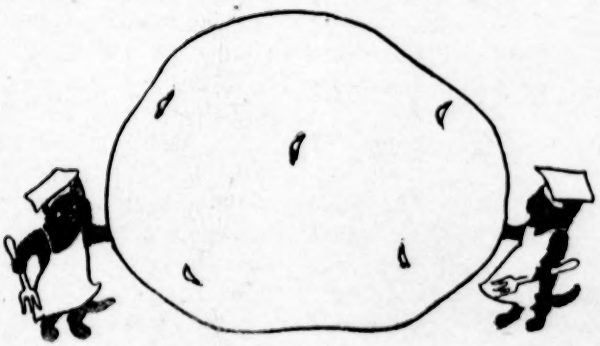
a fancy to her. Lest if he don't, I cal'late I'll have ter tie her out thar in the square as his property and so label her."

"Yes," suggested Mr. Betts and Mr. Tibbins in one breath.

"Wall," mused Mr. Burns, "it could be—" and he wrote hastily upon a piece of Mr. Betts's wrapping paper, and held the sheet before him.

Those who craned their necks read:

Deacon Brown's Mare.
Sold—for Beans.
Consideration five million bushels, based on weight over eleven sixty—particulars from anybody—at market value. Price in cash, twelve million dollars. Sold.'



# Missing—One Diamond Salesman

BY HARRY STEPHEN KEELER

*A diamond salesman with a $30,000 diamond necklace is not to be found. The method of recovering the lost necklace and fixing the responsibility for its disappearance strikes a new note in detective fiction.*

THE chief leaned back in his swivel chair.

"Baumann," he said, "this thing is a little too much for me. All I can do is to have his description telegraphed to every port in the country. As for his letter—there's something odd—something wrong. Tell you what I'd like to do. There's a character in this big city of Chicago that's a regular shark on the Sherlock Holmes business. If anyone can unravel the knot in that postscript, he can. I'd like to hand these two papers over to him."

"Call him in," said his visitor briefly.

The chief pressed a button at the side of his desk. A blue-coated police officer responded instantly. "Send Nichols or one of the other men down to Harrigan's lodging house, find Mackleby Hawkins and tell him to report here immediately."

He turned to his visitor again and continued speaking.

"This Mackleby Hawkins is a queer one. He's what you call a tramp. His hang-out, when he's not gallivanting around the country on the bumpers of a freight, is Harrigan's lodging house. Talks well—carries himself like a man that's had a college education—but no one knows anything definite about him. How the department got acquainted with him—that's a story in itself—but suffice to say, he's done some mighty clever work for us in three or four big cases in the past few years. Seems to have a natural faculty for the game. I've offered him a steady job with the force on several different occasions. All he does is to laugh and refuse, and sail out on another bumping trip. Whenever he—"

The swinging door to the chief's office opened.

The figure of a man about thirty years old stood framed in the doorway. His hair was raven black; his eyes of the same dark hue had a piercing look that was in keeping with his sharp aquiline features. His clothing comprised a neatly patched pair of trousers, a coat with badly frayed cuffs, and a blue flannel shirt held together at the neck by a bandanna handkerchief. Shading his face, which was covered by a several days' growth of beard, was a gray slouch hat.

"Did you want to see me, Chief?" he drawled. "Just got in off the grit an hour ago."

"Come in, Hawkins. Take a chair. This is Mr. Baumann of Baumann and Rheingold, retail jewelers. Mr. Baumann, suppose you tell Hawkins

yourself, just how the land lies."

Old Baumann adjusted his eyeglasses on his nose. He surveyed the newcomer critically. This was certainly a peculiar looking specimen to hand over for some detective work. Still—the chief would hardly have recommended him unless—— Well, he might as well follow the chief's advice if he wished to find out anything at all.

"Well, Mr.—er—ah—Hawkins, here's what we're up against. Last Friday, Skeering—the millionaire harvester machine man of New York—stopped off in our store on his way from the West to look over several diamond necklaces for his daughter's birthday gift. His choice narrowed itself down to two—one valued at thirty thousand dollars—the other at thirty-five thousand. We offered to send one of our salesmen, Murgatroyd, to New York in time to arrive on the daughter's birthday and allow the young lady to select the necklace which appealed to her most. The arrangement was satisfactory.

"Murgatroyd took the jewel case containing the necklaces out Saturday afternoon. We had already purchased for him a through ticket to New York and had reserved a berth on the eight o'clock train that night. Monday was the birthday of Skeering's daughter.

"Murgatroyd was to telegraph me Sunday night on his arrival. Sunday night came—but no telegram. Monday morning came—and still no telegram.

"We communicated with his boarding house at 106 Walton Place. We ascertained that he had packed his suitcase, entered the cab that he had ordered by 'phone, and which was drawn up to the curb at seven o'clock, and had driven off in the direction of the New York Central Depot. That was all they knew.

"On making inquiries of the railroad, we found that his berth had been occupied; showing of course, that he had followed the procedure we had laid out for him."

"Just a moment," interrupted Hawkins. "How long has this Murgatroyd been in your employ?"

"Twenty years. We trusted him implicitly, although of late, rumors have come to our ears that he's been running around with some burlesque-show actress."

"I infer then, that he's a single man," said Hawkins, "since you state that he lives in a boarding house and that he's been mixed up with this actress. What's the name of this woman, and what theatre has she played at?"

"She goes by the stage name of 'Daisy Dalrymple.' The last theatre she played in was 'The Folly.'"

"Good!" remarked the seedy Hawkins. "Go ahead with the story."

"Well," continued old Baumann, "yesterday, which was of course Tuesday, came—and still no telegram—but a letter signed by the missing Murgatroyd himself." He reached over to the chief's desk and took up two papers. "Here it is."

Chicago, Ill., 1913.

Baumann-and Rheingold,
Retail Jewelers,
Chicago.

Dear Sirs:—

I daresay you've discovered by this time that you're out two necklaces valued together at sixty-five thousand dol-

lars. Of course, as you've already surmised, no one else but your former slave, J. H. Murgatroyd, is the proud possessor of these gems. By the day you receive this letter, courteously mailed by a friend back in Chicago, I expect to be safely on board a steamer bound for South America. I will not take up any more of your valuable time.

Yours very thankfully,

J. H. Murgatroyd.

P. S. As per your request of last week, I enclose on a separate sheet a complete list of my customers for the last year (my private record) with which to check up your books.

Old Baumann paused. With one hand he removed his eyeglasses; he leaned over, and with the forefinger of the other, tapped Hawkins on the knee.

"And here's the most incomprehensible, mystifying thing in the whole affair," he said impressively. "The list of names that Murgatroyd encloses contains not one person that has ever been a customer of our firm!"

He proffered Hawkins the penciled list.

The latter waved it back. "Just read off the first ten or fifteen of these so-called customers."

"Well," returned the jewelry merchant, clearing his throat, "they run as follows: Edward C. Larson, William P. Lacey, Frank R. Sayre, George B. Regel, William C. Nolan, Mrs. Jennie A. McCauley, Mrs. Mary G. T. Nelson, Thomas L. Sachs, Rev. Frederick Robinson, Mrs. Willard Lawrence, Mrs. Dwight Merriman, Benjamin F. O'Malley, James G. Philben, Mrs. John O. Perkins, Lee Wing Quong, Mrs. ——"

"That's enough," interrupted his listener. He turned to the chief. "Chief—do you notice anything out of the ordinary about those names?"

"Just ordinary names," grunted the veteran police head. "I happen to know two or three of those people myself. Those are *bona fide* residents."

Hawkins turned to the jewelry dealer. "Mr. Baumann," he asked, "did you ever make a request of Murgatroyd to hand in an account of his past customers?"

"Never. The records of our firm are absolutely complete."

"Is it a customary thing at your store to consummate a sale as high as thirty thousand dollars or more?"

"No. Very rarely do we sell an article worth over a thousand. We don't go in much for the expensive trade."

"Is this letter and list in Murgatroyd's own handwriting?"

"It is—without any doubt."

Hawkins arose.

"Just give me the two documents," he commanded. He tucked them in the pocket of his dilapidated coat. "I'll probably be able to put you in line with some specific information in say—twenty-four hours. I'm going back now to Harrigan's palatial hostelry, dig up an old trunk of mine that's down in his basement, rescue from oblivion my civilized suit of clothes—my boiled shirt and my razor—and then scout around a bit. Good day, gentlemen!"

He stretched himself, yawned, and walked leisurely out. At the door he stopped to roll a cigarette.

"That's his way," said the chief grimly, after he had passed out. "But he gets results!"

It was the afternoon following the interview between Baumann, the chief and Mackleby Hawkins.

The chief lay back in his chair trying in vain to rest comfortably and keep awake at the same time. It was very hot. Outside, in the street, a few horses plodded wearily by, their lazy footsteps sending up clouds of fine dry dust, that settled thickly on every article in the room. A few flies droned languidly back and forth.

He awoke suddenly with a start. A familiar figure, clean-shaven and well-dressed, stood in the doorway, smiling broadly.

The chief was usually very grouchy when he was caught napping. Well, Hawkins," he inquired gruffly, "how are you coming out on yesterday's little problem?"

"Oh—that? That's all solved. Nothing much to it. It's up to you now. Your missing diamond salesman is locked up in a garret room down in the Italian settlement."

"Eh!—what—what's that?" shouted the chief, sitting bolt upright and becoming suddenly wide awake. "Locked up? Who took him in custody?"

"'Taken in custody' is a poor phrase in this instance," returned Hawkins. He happens to be the unwilling prisoner of four Italians—or I might modify the statement and make it three—since one's in New York just now. I might also state that one of these three gentlemen is a master of English. The whole trio is holding Murgatroyd in the effort to make him disclose the whereabouts of the two necklaces. Fortunately, however, he's been too foresighted to place them in the usual jewel case. They've cut up his clothes and ransacked his suitcase as well.

"Now, Chief, I know what the blackhander and the rest of his tribe are. I've hit the road from 'little old N'York' to the Golden Gate with all types of men; and in the final analysis, the crooked Italian shows a yellow streak from his ear lobes to his toe nails. Just send up about four of your best men, give these fellows a liberal exhibition of firearms, and they'll all collapse. The number of the house, by the way, is 762 Milton Street. You'll find your man locked in the attic."

"Well, by all that's holy—Hawkins—where did you—! Wait!" The chief hurriedly pressed a few buttons; when men appeared in answer to his call he gave a few sharp, decisive orders and directions. Presently, four stalwart plain-clothes men hastened down the broad stone steps of the building. At the sidewalk, they separated and hurried off in different directions.

"And what else have you got to tell me, Hawkins? Here, don't stand, have a seat." The chief drew up an extra chair to his desk.

"Well, Chief, there's not a great deal more to tell you. I might proffer a little advice to Baumann, through you, and that's as follows: tell him he'd be doing a sensible thing if he discharged the uniformed Italian who opens the heavy swinging doors at the store for customers. It's poor policy to employ a man who can't keep from discussing the big deals of his house with his own countrymen."

"Where do you get all this dope?" asked the chief.

"I read Murgatroyd's letter—a little closer than the rest of you—that's all."

The chief scratched his head. "Letter? I don't see yet that Murgatroyd told you all this in his letter. And say, why did he give Baumann a false steer, anyway?"

"He didn't—voluntarily. Murgatroyd telephoned for a cab. When he innocently marched into the one that drew up to the curb in front of his boarding house that Saturday night at seven o'clock, he wasn't aware that three other men were going to spring out of an alley several blocks farther down the street, force their way into it, gag him and tie him up. He didn't know that the driver was one of the gang—that the cab was a special one secured for the purpose. Naturally, he wasn't cognizant of all this, since he had ordered a cab himself from a reputable concern that employs drivers who are beyond suspicion.

"He didn't know either, that one of the gang was all in readiness to make the trip East on his ticket in order to make it show on the Pullman car records that lower berth 14, car 4, train 175, assigned to one J. H. Murgatroyd, had been occupied. Neither should he have been expected to know that he would later be compelled, most likely at the point of a gun, to write a letter to his employers, branding himself as a thief who was bound for South America with his firm's property.

"But—he must have expected from the first moment of his captivity that the gang that held him tight would make some sort of an attempt, through a false communication, to ward off the possibility of any search being made for him in Chicago—so he did the best he could under the circumstances.

"He utilized the long hours of his solitary confinement in producing a little letter on his own account—one which the leader was only too glad to allow him to enclose, since, from its businesslike aspect, it made the main letter seem so much the more genuine.

"Chief, I read that list of names pretty closely, and a good many times. Then I discarded the hypothesis that this man had fled the country either alone or with this actress, Daisy Dalrymple, for I had already discovered something about that list that you and Baumann had entirely overlooked."

"And what was that?"

"Simply this: Every surname in the group begins with a letter that falls in the portion of the alphabet that lies between L and S inclusive! Here's a slip of paper containing the first fifteen with their prefixes and given names omitted. It's not necessary to bore you with all the rest.

Larson
Lacey
Sayre
Regel
Nolan
McCauley
Nelson
Sachs
Robinson
Lawrence
Merriman

O'Malley
Philben
Perkins
Quong

"What then does that indicate, Chief? Nothing other than this: that list was compiled from the available portion of some sort of an alphabetical index—for some sort of a reason—which we'll see in a few minutes. Now what's the most common form of alphabetical arrangement of names? The Chicago City Directory of course!

"I made for a city directory, where I commenced to look up these names. I saw in two minutes that I was on the wrong track. Of the first fifteen alone, the names William P. Lacey, James G. Philben, and Lee Wing Quong were missing from the directory. I didn't yet have the correct book—that was obvious.

"What other forms of indexes are common to Chicago citizens? Why not the Subscribers' Directory of the Chicago Telephone Company? I got access at once to the latest one out. Here I had better luck. The names William P. Lacey and James G. Philben showed up—but the elusive Oriental, Mr. Lee Wing Quong, was still unentered. Evidently, I was not yet in possession of the right book.

"So I started out for the Chicago Telephone Company's main office. On the way, I stopped off in the vicinity of Murgatroyd's boarding house on Walton Place, where I spent several profitable hours. I located four livery stables within a radius of half a mile. Of each, I made the same inquiry—whether a conveyance had been ordered any time last Saturday afternoon for J. H. Murgatroyd of Walton Place. I met with a peculiar and similar narrative in every case. A polite voice, it seems, with the faint trace of a foreign accent, had put the same question, over the 'phone, to each livery office in turn, Saturday night at six o'clock. On meeting with a negative answer in three instances, the voice had merely murmured: 'Beg pardon; my mistake,' and had rung off.

"But in the fourth instance, it so happened, that a cab actually had been ordered for J. H. Murgatroyd of Walton Place. On obtaining an affirmative response, the polite voice had replied: 'Mr. Murgatroyd has altered his plans. Kindly cancel the order for his cab. Good bye.' The livery establishment immediately nullified the order on the books.

"So I hied myself over to the main office of the Chicago Telephone Company, where I made a request to be allowed to examine the directories that have been issued at intervals of every three months, for the last twenty years. They handed me a curt refusal. That was the time they 'phoned you at my bidding; after they got you on the wire, however, everything was fine and dandy. They conducted me at once to the old files of subscribers.

"In the directory that just preceded the one in use today, several more names on my list failed to materialize, so I searched further and further back until, in the directory of January—March, 1908,—six years back, I succeeded in locating every name that Murgatroyd had written. This then, or one of the same edition, containing

Chicago's old system of exchanges and numbers, was the book from which the list had been compiled.

"I glanced over the addresses that corresponded to each name. Those of the first five ran as you see on this slip of paper:

625 Cornelia Str.
1304 E. 57th Str.
6544 S. Paulina St.
700 N. Kedzie Ave.
848 Lakeside Pl.

"But assigned to the sixth name was no address at all—merely the following notation:

..... toll .....

"Now, as anyone knows, the word 'toll' in the telephone directory indicates that the party resides in some village or town of Cook County outside of Chicago, and that a long-distance wire is necessary; at any rate, it does not constitute an address. So I discontinued any further study along that line and turned my attention to the telephone exchanges and exchange numbers, of which the first fifteen ran as you may notice on this next slip of paper:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Lake View | 2033 |
| | Hyde Park | 850 |
| | Wentworth | 1891 |
| | Garfield | 550 |
| | Edgewater | 538 |
| toll... | Oak P'k. | 973 |
| | Edgewater | 2076 |
| | Hyde Park | 172 |
| | Midway | 1234 |
| | North | 1926 |
| | North | 591 |
| | Kenwood | 1479 |
| | Edgewater | 2033 |
| | Englewood | 377 |
| | So. Ch'go | 126 |

"Now, Chief, the exchanges as they run down the list present nothing unusual nor satisfactory—only a frequent repetition of the common ones —'Edgewater' and 'North'—but the exchange numbers, ah! they were the key to the mystery!

"It's not necessary to show you all the processes that I put them through—how I added 'em, multiplied 'em, took the first digits, and the last digits, and tried everything I could think of—till I finally struck it.

"You'll observe that if you erase the last two figures on each exchange number you'll have left in some cases, one digit—in other cases, two digits. For instance—2033 with the last two figures erased leaves just a 20; and 850 under the same operation leaves just an 8; and 1891 treated in the same manner leaves just an 18. Now, I have here a separate sheet of paper with the left-hand column showing the first fifteen exchange numbers; the right-hand column shows the same numbers with the two right-hand figures erased.

| | |
|---|---|
| 2033 ..... | 20 |
| 850 ..... | 8 |
| 1891 ..... | 18 |
| 550 ..... | 5 |
| 538 ..... | 5 |
| 973 ..... | 9 |
| 2076 ..... | 20 |
| 172 ..... | 1 |
| 1234 ..... | 12 |
| 1926 ..... | 19 |
| 591 ..... | 5 |
| 1479 ..... | 14 |
| 2033 ..... | 20 |
| 377 ..... | 3 |
| 126 ..... | 1 |

"You'll again observe, if you examine carefully, that none of these numbers in the right-hand column exceeds 'twenty-six.' From that simple fact alone, we must suspect a simple code message, since the simplest code between letters and numbers is, of course, the one where 'A,' the first letter of the alphabet, is represented by 'I'; where 'B,' the second letter of the alphabet, is represented by '2,' and so on, through the twenty-six letters.

"Now, our first figure in the right-hand column is '20' and the twentieth letter in the alphabet is 'T'; our next figure is '8' and the eighth letter of the alphabet is 'H'; the following figure is '18' and the eighteenth letter of the alphabet is 'R.' Substituting in each case, the letter of the alphabet that corresponds numerically to it, our column of figures presents a column of letters, the first fifteen showing as follows:

20 ..... T
8 ..... H
18 ..... R
5 ..... E
5 ..... E
9 ..... I
20 ..... T
1 ..... A
12 ..... L
19 ..... S
5 ..... E
14 ..... N
20 ..... T
3 ..... C
1 ..... A

"At this point, I knew without any further doubt that Murgatroyd was in some sort of predicament, that he had attempted to get a few words to us by a code and, as it appears, all he had was the middle portion of some antiquated telephone directory.

"Carrying the substitution process through the entire column of numbers that we obtain from the whole list of names, and arranging these letters alongside of one another, we get the following jumble:

THREEITALSENTCABHELD
PRISTOPWHITEFRAMHST
WOCHIMSNOGFBHVCTCL
OSALSOSEARCHDSTCSHU
RRYHELP.

"By splitting this jumble up and inserting a few letters and punctuation marks where it appears necessary, we get something more coherent. Here it is:

THREE ITAL(IAN)S
ENT(ERED) CAB; (AM)
HELD PRIS(ONER) (AT) TOP
(OF) WHITE FRAM(E)
H(OU)S(E) (WITH) TWO
CHIM(NEY)S; NO. G-F-B;
H(A)V(E) C(U)T
CLO(THE)S, ALSO
SEARCH(E)D S(UI)T
C(A)S(E); HURRY HELP.

"Now one obscurity remains: 'No. G-F-B.' By merely leaving the original numbers in place of the senseless letters G—F—B, we have '7—6—2.'

"Now, where would three Italians, or four, including the driver, with a bound man in a cab, be likely to have imprisoned him for several days while they made a thorough search of his clothing and belongings—while they interrogated him again and again as to the location of the jewels, and received but one explanation, which they would not believe? Why—no place else than down in Little Italy;

for you know, yourself, Chief, they couldn't get away with it elsewhere.

"So I've spent all morning taking in the Italian settlement from the elevated railroad west to the river, and from Chicago Avenue north to Division Street, looking for houses numbered '762.' I've met with all sorts of 'em—green houses and red houses; even Italian churches and empty lots, until suddenly, at 762 Milton Street—a narrow, dark, badly-paved and ill-smelling thoroughfare—I ran square into a white frame house with two chimneys, and with attic windows tightly boarded up.

"Back I went, hot-foot, to the Telephone Company. Their installation and removal records show that in the spring of 1908, a telephone was removed from 762 Milton street—which accounts for the presence there of such an old 'phone directory as one of that date. From the company's offices—"

The telephone on the desk jangled sharply. The chief raised the receiver to his ear.

"H-e-l-l-o—h e l l o—t h a t y o u, O'Rourke?—nabbed the three of 'em, you say—good—and—Murgatroyd—he's O.K. is he?—pretty bruised?—too bad we can't fix the beggars for that—of course they wouldn't show fight—they never do—and the diamonds?—what! Well, I'll be—all right—all of you report to my office at once—good-bye."

The chief turned towards his visitor. "O'Rourke tells me that the diamonds—"

"Were safe all the time," interrupted Hawkins. "I forgot to tell you about that. Murgatroyd lost his nerve Saturday afternoon; didn't want to take a chance on carrying sixty-five thousand dollars worth of diamonds over a twenty-four-hour trip, so he carried 'em to the office of one of the big express companies and expressed 'em as an insured package—insured at their actual value. He counted on having old Skeering identify him at New York.

"His landlady kindly consented to my going over his room yesterday afternoon. Tucked down in the bosom of one of his newly-laundered shirts, I found the express company's receipt. Here it is."

The chief looked at Hawkins for several minutes; then he spoke. "Hawkins, you're an ingenious chap, and at the same time you're a blanked fool. Are you going to be a tramp all your life? There's a place on the force for you anytime you want it. Do you want to start in tomorrow morning as one of the regulars?"

"Say, Chief, did you ever go flying through the night on the blind baggage of a sixty-mile-an-hour flyer, or swinging your legs out the opening of a 'side-door' Pullman;—full of the joy of living—and freedom—and speed? Did you ever—sh-h-h!" He held up a warning forefinger. His eyes took on a far-away look. Can you hear it, Chief?"

The chief strained his ears. Then he stepped to the window and peered out. He heard nothing—nothing except a wierd, long-drawn-out whistle, followed by the staccato 'chug-chug-chug' of a freight train pulling out of the railway yards near the station. So he turned back to his desk.

But his visitor was gone.

# The Hitless Wonder

BY A. E. SWOYER

*A star fielder of a champion baseball team is a miserable performer at the bat. He faces banishment to the "bushes" on the eve of his marriage because of this weakness. A hit in an important game will save him to the flesh-pots of big league playing.*

ED" HOFFMAN customarily finished the season with a fielding percentage of .998 or thereabouts, and a batting average having .173 as a maximum—figures which influenced in exact ratio his connection with the payroll of the Tigers, and his place in the affections of the redoubtable John McGuckin, manager of that sterling band of athletes.

In fact, as McGuckin said, "Red" put more gray in his hair than did all his other troubles combined, and it was rumored among the members of the club that the manager always kept two unsigned papers in his pocket—one being a release for the outfielder, to be used when that worthy "fanned" more than three times in one game, and the other a check for bonus due whenever "Red" saved a game by picking a drive off the right-field fence.

But "Red" was lucky; season after season passed without seeing his separation from the paycheck, and whenever the harassed manager felt that he had due and just cause for applying his John Hancock to the papers that would send "Red" to Kalamazoo or to Oshkosh, that gentleman would render the process null and void by pulling off some sensational fielding stunt.

Finally, however, luck deserted him—and, as luck will, at a most inconvenient time. The "Hitless Wonder" was in love with a lady whom only the salary of a Big Leaguer could support in the style to which she was willing to become accustomed, and by the irony of fate the prospective bridegroom was never nearer transfer, bag and baggage, to the most insignificant of the minors. Nevertheless, by doing the impossible in the field, and by daring cunning on the paths, on the few occasions when some pitcher's liberality got him on the bases, "Red" managed to hang on to almost the close of the season—a time when, with the Tigers well up in the first division, visions of prize money and the fat pickings of post-season games tickled his vision.

Then the blow fell, in the shape of a summons to the manager's office—a sanctum which "Red" entered with dire forebodings, to find McGuckin engaged in the careful perusal of a familiar-looking paper.

"Hoffman, you're a Class A fielder, but you couldn't spank a whitewashed elephant with a barn door—not even if someone held the elephant! So—I guess it's yours for the Alfalfa League and the uncut timber, Danny. I'm sorry."

Hoffman shifted from one foot to the other, and twiddled his hat nervously.

"How about another chance, Mac?" he blurted. "I got particular reasons for wanting to stay awhile longer—and I really ain't so bad when I get on base, am I?"

"No kick there, Danny—but you don't ever get on!" McGuckin fiddled the document absently for a moment, then turned sharply towards his fielder.

"Still it's pretty near the end of the season—tell you what I'll do, Danny; we'll let tomorrow's game decide it. If you make a hit or a run, or if you drive in a run, you stay with the Tigers—the rest of the year, anyway. If you don't—well, I don't care if you chase a fly clear up the top bench of the bleachers, you'll be canned. Put that in your pipe!"

"Red's" grin extended from ear to ear. "You're on, Mac!" he chirped. "Hit, run, or Oshkosh—that's me!" And, with a military salute, he whirled out of the office.

His cheerfulness staid with him through to the next day, nor was he discouraged one whit by his knowledge that to hold his job he would have to perform a feat that he had accomplished so rarely that a safe hit was an event which provoked comments on the part of his team mates. He even stepped up to the plate with a jaunty air and a confident expression, which so surprised the pitcher that he handed "Red" three wide ones before he settled down and struck him out.

The next time Hoffman came up was in the third; he improved the occasion by swinging viciously at the first ball pitched, with a result entirely out of proportion to his effort, for the sphere rose in a gentle curve and settled with a dull "tunk" into the first baseman's mitt. Poor "Red"—this was his nearest approach to making good, for in two more times at bat he struck out, once on three pitched balls.

McGuckin seethed on the bench, for this was an important game; both twirlers were pitching air-tight ball, and the score was tied. So the ninth inning began, with the Tigers in the field; Hutchings, pitching like a machine, mowed down the first two Bronchos—and the next man up met the ball squarely on the A. G. Spaulding, with a full swing of his powerful arms.

At the crack of the bat, Danny put down his head and dug in his toes in a wild race to the fence—he had heard that sound before and knew what it meant. As he ran, he glanced once over his shoulder, and then ran harder than before, for the ball was tagged "Home Run" as plainly as a label on a crate of dry-goods. As he neared the fence, he took one more look—then sprang into the air, half turning as he did so. With a crash that might have been heard in the stands, he struck the fence, then fell in a heap at its foot—but clasped in his bare hand was the ball, and the score was still tied!

Before the nearest players could get to him, "Red" sprang to his feet and trotted in amid a storm of applause that rocked the stands; to this he turned a deaf ear, for it was an accustomed thing—besides, the same voices had yelled hoots and cat-calls

when he had struck out in earlier innings, as is the way with crowds. More than that, he was bruised and sore from head to foot—and he was the first man to face the pitcher, with the necessity before him of making a hit or a run, or else losing his job.

To give himself more time to pull together, he trotted in very slowly, dropping to a walk as he neared the first-base line—the Broncho guardian of that sack having tossed his mitt to the ground, according to custom, and then made his way to the bench. "Red" almost stepped on his glove, which he picked up, and then tossed a trifle farther from the base line—and no one but his manager noted that he held it for a trifle longer than seemed necessary.

"Play ball!" yelled the umpire, and "Red" stepped slowly to the plate, while the big Broncho pitcher wound himself into fearful contortions and grinned happily at the prospect of starting the inning with a strike-out. Perhaps he was careless, or it may have been due to "Red's" desperation, but the batter made a mighty swipe at the first ball pitched, connected fairly, and was on his way to first like a scared rabbit!

"Red's" hard luck had not deserted him, however, for his drive was straight at the Broncho short-stop, who made a beautiful pick-up, and lined the ball to first with all the strength of a willing arm. The baseman, seeing Danny coming like a race-horse, but still some yards away, smirked gleefully as he reached for the perfectly thrown ball, which settled with a hollow "tunk" into his waiting mitt—and then, with a yell of pain, he dropped the ball!

It seemed almost as if Hoffman had been expecting something of the sort, for without slackening speed he rounded first, and set full sail for second—a fact which the astonished baseman, still looking with wonder at his mitt, in a vain endeavor to account for the dropped ball, did not realize until the yells of the crowd woke him up. Stooping quickly, he snatched the ball, juggled it for a moment—and then threw it some ten feet over the second baseman's head!

By the time that the left fielder had retrieved the ball, Danny was on third—or rather sailing past third, at a mile-a-second clip. The left fielder took one look at the runner, decided that no relayed toss to the second baseman could catch him, and attempted the long throw home.

It was a beautiful effort: the ball shot almost on a line from deep left to the catcher's mitt. When "Red" was still twenty feet from home, the catcher was all set to receive the ball, and every man in the bleachers and grandstand was on his feet, frantically yelling "Slide! Slide!"

So Danny did! A streak of dust, starting some ten feet up the path, and terminating in a tangled mass of arms and legs at the plate, marked the attempt, with players and umpire obscured by a yellow cloud.

Then, from out of the confusion, sounded the umpire's voice.

"S-a-a-fe!" he yelled—and the game was over, with "Red's" run winning for the Tigers.

Barely had McGuckin gotten to his office when "Red's" grinning face projected itself around the corner of the

door, and his lanky form ensconced itself into the manager's other chair.

Without a word the manager reached into his desk, pulled the blank release out of a pigeon hole and dropped it into the waste basket. Drawing his check book towards him, and with fountain pen poised, he looked sharply at the fielder.

"What I said yesterday goes, Danny!" he announced. "Also, you've got a little bonus coming to you for that catch against the fence—but you don't get it till you tell me what happened to that first baseman!"

"Red" twiddled his hat and looked at the ceiling.

"Well, Mac," he drawled, "you just suppose that somebody stuck a needle into the palm of that baseman's mitt so's it was out o' sight, but not quite goin' through on the other side. He'd be some surprised when he went to catch a swift throw, wouldn't he?"

For a moment player and manager gazed understandingly at one another, and a wide grin spread over the features of each. Still grinning, McGuckin began to fill out "Red's" check.

"What'll we call this, Danny?" he chuckled—"bonus or wedding present?"

"Better make it enough for both, Mac dear!" answered "Red," brazenly.

# Mr. Purvis of Pensacola

BY HINTON GILMORE

*Here is a real Black Cat story that will start you chuckling. Of course none of us are superstitious and maybe that's the reason we never walk under ladders and always shiver when we see 13!*

IF you chanced to read the journal of that date, you already know that on Friday, April 13th, Mr. G. W. Purvis, dealer in hides, pelts, tallow and beeswax, left Pensacola bound for St. Louis.

But sometimes there is more to a casual journey to St. Louis than appears in the column devoted to "City Brevities and News of the Streets." Let us, therefore, violate the Interstate Commerce Commission ruling on that subject, and ride free and unobserved with the well-known Pensacola dealer in hides and pelts, tallow and beeswax.

Nothing of greater pith occurred between Pensacola and Mobile than the minor interruptions of a young man with a semi-uniform, who had viands and magazines to sell, for Mr. Purvis, with thrift, chose to ride in a day coach.

At Mobile, there boarded the train one "Oriole Joe" Maxey. He had about him a furtive air and a gaily checked suit of clothes. A hand-bag, which he bore gingerly, had the bulge that comes from compact and weighty contents. It would not be a bad guess to venture that "Oriole Joe" carried in his satchel an ordinary gold brick of commerce, whose core, were it pierced by a suspecting gimlet, would have assayed heavily in lead.

His purpose in getting on at Mobile was two-fold—to avoid the awakened attention of the police, and to sell, mortgage, or otherwise convey to an innocent purchaser for value, one gold brick to the best commercial advantage. He might have chosen to ride in the more luxuriously fitted parlor car which adorned the rear of the train, but "Oriole Joe" sought the day coach, wherein rode, blissfully ignorant of gold bricks, our Mr. Purvis of Pensacola.

"Oriole Joe" entered the car and sized up the occupants. He was quick to note the trusting eye and the receding chin of the Pensacolan. In the third seat beyond, he also observed another promising-looking prospect. Truly, this began to look like a prosperous sally into the marts of trade, and he bemoaned the fact that his extreme poverty prevented his purchase of lead sufficient for two marketable bricks. With one, it was a question of choosing between Purvis and the other prospect, a farmer who had just settled a mortgage on his home and was heading for New Orleans to buy an automobile.

The instinct of chance was strong in Maxey. It was a religion with him. He would hardly have thought of starting out on Friday the 13th, except

that he held a superior dread of being locked up on such an unlucky day. So, with two birds ready for the plumous salt, he hesitated, and finally put the issue up to fortune. Drawing a coin from his pocket, he designated Purvis, the pelt dealer, "tails," and the farmer who pined for rapid locomotion, "heads." There was a trifling spin of the disc. Maxey observed the result with a satisfied smile, and forthwith struck up an acquaintance with the farmer.

Ensuing events have no interest except to a New Orleans automobile dealer, whose well-devised plan of follow-up letters failed to bring in a promising prospect just when he seemed cinched.

Miss Celeste Adair, very attractive, though overdressed, boarded the train of Mr. Purvis of Pensacola, at New Orleans, ticketed ostensibly for Meridian. But she had something more in view than a short smoky ride upon the cars. Briefly and bluntly, Miss Adair was low in funds. Life in New Orleans is expensive, and the young woman, being a devotee of certain refined palaces of chance, longed for the wherewithal to make an uphill climb against Luck. Her object in taking a trip at this time was to make the acquaintance of some married person of home-town respectability, from whom funds might be drawn by that inelegant but often effective procedure of blackmail. Miss Adair chose the day coach as the most likely field for her endeavors.

Scarcely had the train left New Orleans—for action in brief stories must be swift—when she observed Mr. Purvis. Here, in all innocence, was game. He looked just prosperous enough to stand for about a $250 monthly gouge for perhaps a year, before threshing it out over his own lares and penates, and then appealing to the police. Mr. Purvis, unconscious of the unkind scheme, scanned the quotations of the Hide and Pelt Dealer's Guide.

Miss Adair made her survey more inclusive. The car yielded, however, but one other prospect. From appearances he was a man of bucolic dignity—professor, perhaps, in a small school, or pastor tending the spiritual grazing of a small town flock. From either of the two men, the adventuress felt that there might be an income derived. It was a matter of no consequence to her which one paid. Being a follower in the ragged train of Chance she left it to her fickle highness.

Thrusting a dainty finger between the pages of a book she carried, she agreed with herself that if the number under her hand proved to be an even numeral, Mr. Purvis should by that edict be chosen to rehabilitate the lowering funds of the young woman; if the numeral were odd, the distinction would descend upon the dignified gentleman with the clerical costume.

At Meridian, a man with beetling brow and formidable chin boarded the train and hurriedly approached the seat where Miss Adair sat in mirthful conversation with her companion. There were harsh words spoken low. Threats of divorce proceedings with corresponding publicity were effectively voiced. Some agreement was reached, and Miss Adair accompanied her beetle-browed confederate back to

New Orleans on the next train. The president of a little college for girls over near the Alabama line, is sending her $200 each month with which she is slowly recuperating her sunken losses.

Meridian added a few passengers to the train list, among them Harvey Colliver, suavity itself. Dressed stylishly, manicured, polished and perfumed, he seemed out of place in the dingy day coach. But it was a question of business with him, and he lost no time in setting about his work. Standing in the doorway of the car, he sized up the field. Observing Mr. Purvis of Pensacola, he smiled. He almost went forward to take the vacant half of the seat, without further preliminaries. A second glance, though, revealed another promised dividend. Across the car and forward, sat a stout passenger, begirdled by a heavy gold watch chain—one of the obvious earmarks of small town affluence.

Colliver had a proposition in which he felt either might be interested. But complications might arise if he attempted to interview them both. It was a question of a quick choice.

Colliver, being weak on matters requiring instant decision, left the problem to Chance, ingeniously. If the next station bore a name of one syllable, he proposed to interest Mr. Purvis in his scheme, if of two syllables or more, the stout gentleman with the auriferous girdle was to be approached. The next station was Bartholomew, and two hours later Harvey Colliver left the train at an obscure town in Northern Mississippi, and the begirdled stout man perused a deed, reciting a consideration of $600, cash in hand, paid for certain city lots in the town of Subaqua, located, had he but known, twenty miles out in the Gulf of Mexico.

Without further incident, early morning brought the train to St. Louis, and the hide dealer from Florida, more wearied than rested by an awkward sleep gained while he crouched his angular self between resisting seats, arose, stiffened from his ungainly slumbers, and walked, blinking, into the station. Remaining just long enough at a convenient lunch counter to engulf a cup of coffee, he wandered aimlessly in a direction which he imagined would bring him into the business section of the city.

At five o'clock A. M. in outlying streets, little traffic stirs in St. Louis. But at a darkened corner, two men stood in the shadow and observed whatsoever might be moving. They saw the approaching Mr. Purvis and noted with satisfaction (as they say in the "Dictated but not read" letters,) that he wore in the bosom of his seventy-five cent shirt, a diamond stud, which sparkled gaily as all good studs are supposed to do, whether in Pensacola, or St.Louis.

The shadowed shadows decided upon seizure and forfeiture, such being a method of acquisition in which they were proficient. A minute or so, and the prize was almost within grasp: being merely a question of a quick blow in the back of the man's head, a hasty pinch at the shirt bosom, and a speedy getaway through convenient alleys.

Closer came the prey. Suddenly

"Lop-Eared" Hunt whispered:

"Nuttin' doin' tonight, bo! I've lost the rabbit's foot out of me pocket!"

Which goes far in explaining why Mr. Purvis, in perfect good health and humor, much refreshed by his walk from the station, came into the Continental Hotel, aroused a sleepy night clerk and inquired for a room without bath.

The Continental had but two empty rooms for the price at which Mr. Purvis desired to be housed. They were numbered, if you chance to be interested in such trifling statistics, 1323 and 1313. Given but two chances, with the necessity of making a choice, the clerk became vacillation personified. He seemed unable to select. First his hand stretched for the key to room 1313, and back again to No. 1323.

At that moment Bell Boy No. 13, seeking instructions relative to ice water desired, urgently, by a bibulous reservoir in No. 417, came within view of the hesitant clerk. He saw the boy's badge with its emblazoned "13" and considered the matter settled propitiously, handed key No. 1313 to the menial who had charge of the new guest's solitary suitcase—shabby security for a much-desired ransom.

"Please call me at eight o'clock in the morning," the Pensacolan admonished as he vanished toward the elevator, leaving the yawning night clerk with leisure for his desired repose.

At eight o'clock, a dutiful servant rapped lightly on the door of Room 1313. No response came, and the rapping increased in rapidity and vigor. Still no response.

There came through the transom a wispy odor of fugitive gas. Quickly apprehensive, (gas being expensive,) the boy summoned his superiors, and the door was unlocked with a key sent up from the desk. There was an undeniable presence of gas. It wasn't even necessary to light a match to find the point of escape, for a low hissing from a pipe in the corner of the room, gave a quick clue to the break. After pausing to shut off the supply at the point of intake, the hotel servants gave attention to the unconscious figure on the bed. Life existed in the crumpled heap of humanity, but at a low ebb. Physicians were summoned, restoratives were placed in operation, and very slowly the gentleman was brought back from the hem of the hereafter.

A reporter, inquisitive as his clan must ever be, sought, in addition to information gleaned from the hotel register, to learn more thoroughly the subject matter for his first yarn of the day. With no pang of impropriety he searched the clothing of the man who was being resuscitated. In an upper vest pocket, the reporter found a card which shall be read in your presence and the reading shall end the tale.

The card proclaimed the unconscious man to be:—

G. W. PURVIS,
Pensacola, Fla.

President National Association for the Eradication of Senseless Superstition.
Our Creed:—"There's no such thing as luck!"

# Ghosts of Other Days

BY L. W. MEREDITH

*Most times the ghosts of days gone by bob up to embarrass us but sometimes, as in this case, the ghosts serve very good purposes.*

RETTY Polly."

"Awk-awk! I'll be back at midnight."

"You'll what?"

"Awk-awk! I'll be back at midnight. I'll be back at midnight."

"Um-hum." Whereat father turned away and picked up the evening paper.

After the evening meal, father walked out into the library with daughter. Besides possessing a goodly share of property which he had acquired by many hard years of labor on the farm, John Harmon possessed a daughter to aid in spending the income therefrom. He also possessed a keen brain which neighbors had been unable to fathom since he had taken possession of the old Knox property years before.

Whence Harmon came, or what his past had been, neither his rustic neighbors of the farm or his friends of the small town to which he had later retired, had been able to discover. Suffice it to say that he had "blown in," purchased a quarter section and, by diligent work, added thereto three other quarter sections, an elevator, and stock sufficient to control the village bank.

Now, "Dad" Harmon had retired to the village and spent most of his time in his library and in sending checks to his daughter at the boarding school, and later at the seminary. The check issue did not cease when she had completed her schooling, for the city was nearby, and society called—society, into which none other of the village girls had been able to break.

But Nadine possessed charm, beauty, wit, education, talent; and father possessed coin. Yet Nadine had one fault, father maintained, and that was termed "flightiness" by fond parent.

"Nadine," he said, again taking up his evening paper, "I saw that young Shagrue leaving as I came in this evening."

Nadine flushed. She saw a squall ahead. Father did not appreciate Harry Shagrue's acquaintance. Harry was everything desirable if possession of inherited money and natural ability to spend it were all that might be required of man. But father saw only the idle, unambitious, irresponsible trait in Nadine's caller.

"You just don't like Harry because he doesn't work," Nadine pouted. "He doesn't need to work. He's awfully good to me, and his people——"

"Awr-k! Awk! I'll be back at midnight. I'll be back at mi——!

"Nadine, that's my old Dante."

"Awr-k! Awr-k!" screeched the

bird while it tumbled rudely from its perch when the heavy book, hurled by the girl, struck its cage, and Nadine peevishly hurried from the room.

"Oh! Uh-hum!" mused father.

Up in his smoking den, Father Harmon puffed slowly at his pipe. An amused smile played about his lips, and now and then an insuppressible chuckle shook his sides.

"I guess our long-prying gossip mongers wouldn't gloat over this array," he murmured to himself. "There'd be some others pleased to, if they could step in now—Old Chief Halpin, for instance. There's the slug that tapped Johnny Scholes when he lost his Futurity winnings. There's the old set Billy and Johnny used when they cracked the Central Trust. That's when 'Johnny' mysteriously disappeared, and John Harmon bought a farm and became a modern, up-to-date, scientific agriculturist.

"But I guess I won't need any of that junk. It's back to the safe with that. Here's the old knife that 'Johnny the Slasher' was an adept with, and the edge is still as keen as a razor. Say, your last job is at hand, old blade. Then it's the furnace for you and all your partners."

A black cap and a stringy gray mustache accompanied the keen-bladed knife into a pocket, and John Harmon's past went back into the heavy safe where it had been buried for these twenty-five years.

As father passed down the hall to his room, he noted the light burning in his daughter's room and rapped.

"Good night, daughter."

"Good night, fa-father," came the tearful reply.

It was eleven o'clock. And the bird had said:

"I'll be back at midnight."

"But surely," thought Nadine, "father did not think anything of the bird's senseless chatter."

There was nothing unusual about the village station until one minute before train time. Then the crowd sat up and took notice.

When eleven lonely, unaccompanied men, waiting at a junction station for a midnight train, observe approaching them an inconsequential fellowman escorting as rare a vision of feminine loveliness as ever graced a Country Club ball, there is likely to be a stir.

So the eleven individual, lonely men at the village station, took a new interest in life when a nervous, drooping youth kangarooed up to the ticket window and purchased tickets for two to the city, while a remarkably pretty girl stood guard over a pair of brand-new suit cases.

"Old John Harmon's daughter, I'll be blowed," whispered a waiting brakeman to the new ticket agent.

"Elopin', I'll bet my bottom dollar."

"Aw, let 'em alone," yawned the agent.

So engrossed were all in the pair—or rather the girl—that no one took notice of the short, thick-set man with the heavy cap and scraggly moustache, when he came in and took a seat in the far end of the station waiting-room. Neither did any one notice that he did not buy a ticket, but walked toward the door as a flash of light

and a whistle's shriek served notice of the midnight flyer's approach.

Foremost in the line to the door, was the insipid youth and the bewitching girl. But the door seemed to stick, and try as he might, the bulky man with the stringy, scraggly moustache could not budge it. The train stopped and the waiters, impatient, crowded about the door, when it suddenly gave way to the bulky man's jerk and he crashed back square against the insipid youth.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, sir, a thousand times," said the stranger, as he lifted the youth to his feet and aided him to adjust his overcoat, and the travelers rushed to the train. But none observed that the little stout man did not climb aboard.

The blissful tete-a-tete of an exceedingly lovely girl and an over-fastidious, under-fascinating man, was rudely interrupted.

"Tickets," demanded a gruff voice at Harry's elbow.

"I—I, why—certainly I put the tickets in my vest pocket," said Shagrue.

But as his fingers were withdrawn ticketless from his left vest pocket, his lustreless eyes popped wide with astonishment. The tickets were not there.

"Wha-where?" and his lifeless fingers took on a frantic, unaccustomed activity as he delved into one pocket, then another and another, with like useless results.

"Why, Harry dear, you bought them—I saw you."

"Yes, but where are they? I put them in my vest pocket, and they are gone. Oh, well, I'll pay the fare."

He twisted about in his seat and reached in his hip pocket for his pocketbook—and turned a ghost-like face toward Nadine.

His pocketbook was gone. And moreover, the pocket was neatly slashed down one side, as though by the edge of a keen razor, wielded by an experienced hand.

"My tickets, my pocketbook, my watch—I've been robbed!"

The conductor was all sympathy. He saw the ripped pocket, the dangling watch chain. It had been a smooth job. But sympathy would not pay dividends on P. & Q. railroad stock. The next station was Mayville and the trolley would take them right back to the village. They could make the one o'clock car, and the eighty cents in loose change in Harry's one untouched pocket would carry them home again.

Tearfully, very tearfully, a sweet but weary little girl bade good-bye to a dejected, downcast man, at the Harmon doorstep, an hour and a half later. Nadine's key fitted the door perfectly, and not a sound was made. Father would never know. And Nadine crept silently up the stairs to her room, there to cast herself upon the snow-white coverlet of her bed and shed bucketful after bucketful of real tears.

In a secluded den on the second floor at the Harmon home, a shaded light cast a brillian gleam over a little table.

On the table was heaped an incongruous assortment. There lay a heavy, well-worn black cap, a scraggly moustache, a keen-edged knife.

And loosely scattered over all were bills of all denominations—currency—real coin of the realm.

"One hundred, two hundred, three hundred, three twenty-five, forty-five, fifty, fifty-five, six, seven—and tickets for the city. My, they were going to have some trip!" chuckled a short, thick, heavy-set man who, throughout the daytime, sat in the office of president of the village bank, behind doors upon which were emblazoned the words, "John Harmon, Pres."

Carefully, the banker folded the bills and placed them, together with a bejeweled gold, but chainless watch, in a russet leather pocketbook. Therein he also placed two railroad tickets, both torn almost in halves.

On the back of the pocketbook were the initials, "H. S."

The next day, Harry Shagrue received by special delivery a heavy package. In it was a russet leather pocketbook, with the initials "H. S." engraved thereon. In the pocketbook was a gold, bejeweled, chainless watch, $357 in bills, and two badly mutilated tickets from the village to the city.

There was also a card. It read:—

"A reformed pickpocket."

Nadine, the next day, pondered as father chuckled when the green imp shrieked.

"Awk-awk! I'll be back at midnight."

# The Loyalty of Sergeant Wilkes

BY. WILLIAM ADAMS SIMONDS

*The subtlety of this ingenious story makes a hint at its plot dangerous to the interest of story. It's a battle of wits between two detectives.*

INSPECTOR Sheridan looked up from his mass of photographs and Bertillons and greeted his visitor.

"Ah, Sergeant," he said, "I suppose you are ready to report on the Grummer case. Good! Sit down; I have been expecting you."

Sergeant Wilkes seated himself carefully and deliberately. In his wide babylike eyes there was a wearied look, which was accentuated by the glare of the green-shaded lights. Lack of sleep showed in the lines of his face, in his manner, as he took out his notebook slowly and thumbed the pages.

As the inspector guessed—he had come to detail the results of his three days' investigation into the strange murder of Paul Grummer. He filled his pipe and lighted it before proceeding, for in the sanctum of "Happy Jack" Sheridan, big, broad, good-natured police official, many things were permitted which other inspectors denied.

"I can't say," he began finally, "that I've cleared up the whole thing yet, but I think I've located the man. You remember the primary facts surrounding the case, I suppose; and the peculiar manner in which the body was found."

The inspector nodded.

"The body lay, you recall, in a vacant lot on Clemmer street," Wilkes went on. "A milkman stumbled over it at early dawn while crossing the lot to reach the rear of the house next door. It was a few feet off the sidewalk—five feet, to be exact, for I measured it."

"That was about four o'clock in the morning, if I recollect," the inspector interposed.

"Yes; just at daybreak. No one in the neighborhood knew Grummer; we identified him by means of some worn letters in his pocket. That was about all we found, except a ring bearing a few keys and some small coins. Apparently, he was almost broke.

"There was no sign of a struggle: not a bruise or wound or even trace of blood on the corpse. It seemed to me like a case of heart failure when I first took up the threads. The body lay there stiff and cold; the doctors said death must have come at least four hours previous."

"I am familiar with the case so far. Heart failure it seemed to me, too, from what I heard of it. What led you to think differently?"

"There were several things. Chief among them was the manner in which the body lay, five feet from the sidewalk. If it had been a natural death,

I argued, the man would have fallen where he stood, or close at hand. Certainly he would not have been wandering across a dark, vacant lot at midnight, some distance from the path!"

"I believe you're right in that. But how do you think he was killed?"

"I haven't determined that yet, Inspector. We searched the vicinity, but couldn't find a weapon of any description. It occurred to me that perhaps he had been murdered elsewhere and the body carted there. If so, I felt that someone beside the actual slayer must know of the deed. Inquiry showed that no vehicle had stopped near the spot on the preceding night."

He consulted his notes.

"As I said, there were a couple of worn letters in his pocket. From them we got his name and also his address—the Paris—a cheap lodging house. As you know, it's not a hang-out for dips—respectable enough, but low-class. The landlord identified him right away and took us to his room.

"There was nothing unusual about the place: four walls, a bed and a washstand. In the top drawer—the only drawer—of the stand we found a few articles: tablet, pencil, shirt and some handkerchiefs. His mode of living, we learned, was simple; he spent much of his time in his room, and occasionally went out for long absences. He was a close-mouthed fellow, saying little."

Sheridan wheeled to his desk abruptly and jotted down a memorandum.

"When did they first see Grummer?" he asked over his shoulder.

"They said he came there about two months ago. We couldn't find out anything as to where he hailed from or who his relatives were. You see, he never mentioned anything about them—quite a character, this Grummer.

"It was hard to determine his exact age, as he looked worn out. They placed him at thirty-six, but he might have been as young as thirty. From the little he did let drop, they gathered that he had been used to considerable money once.

"Nobody ever came to see him, so far as the landlord knew. That is, no one except a messenger-boy who came on the night Grummer met his death. Grummer must have called him; at any rate, he came early in the evening, around eight o'clock I think, and left very soon afterward. Some two hours later, Grummer also went out, and that was the last they saw of him."

"Of course you found the messenger-boy?"

"Yes; we looked for him next. He had been in uniform, so it wasn't very hard to locate him."

Again he looked at his notes.

"Frankie Windmueller is his name; he works at an office not far from the Paris. He checked the call up on his book and remembered it besides. A party named Grummer had called for a boy to deliver a message and he responded.

"There was one peculiar thing about that note. The address given the boy was on Clemmer street, two blocks from where the milkman stumbled over Grummer. In short,

it was the address of your home, Inspector!"

Inspector Sheridan stared. The dark grey eyes lost their twinkle for a moment, while a look of deep surprise filled them.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "You are mistaken, Wilkes."

"No, Inspector; the number was 4406. That's your number, isn't it?"

"Yes," Sheridan admitted, but——"

"The note," Wilkes hastened to add, "was addressed to Frederick A. Gibbs. Gibbs at that time, you know, was engaged to marry your sister, Miss Geraldine. Excuse me for mentioning that, as I know it must be distasteful to you, since Gibbs broke it off. But it's in the case and I've got to report it."

"That's all right," the inspector declared, "go on. Tell me everything."

" As I say, Grummer's note was for Gibbs. Why he sent it to your house I don't make out, unless he happened to know that Gibbs was calling there that night. That's correct, isn't it?"

"Um-m-m—let me see. Yes, he was; that was the night they broke the engagement. Singular coincidence, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is rather—if you'll excuse the remark. Do you know the reason it was broken?"

"It was just an ordinary lover's quarrel, as I understand it; those things will happen sometimes, you know. Of course we didn't hear about it until the next day, when we read it in the papers."

"Are you sure that was the real reason?"

"Yes; at least, that's what she said. Why? What makes you ask?"

"There's something strange about it, Inspector, as I'll explain later. The messenger-boy must have got there about eight-thirty, I figure. Gibbs must have answered him. You'll understand my reason for thinking so when you read the note."

Wilkes extracted a crumpled, dirty bit of paper from his book and passed it to Sheridan. The inspector, startled, took it, and looked first at one side and then the other.

"Good work, Sergeant!" he exclaimed. "Where did you find this?"

"It was picked up on the sidewalk halfway between your home and the scene of the murder. Either it had fallen there or been thrown away—probably fallen."

The inspector read the note. It was penned in a hand that was plainly disguised, yet, nevertheless, neat and painstaking.

Mr. Frederick A. Gibbs,

Dear Sir: I have something of grave importance to say to you in view of your approaching marriage to Miss Geraldine Sheridan. I feel that you ought to know it, because I have certain facts to present which will cause you at once to break off your engagement. I come from the town where she lived before she moved here, and know what I'm talking about. If you are interested in your own welfare, meet me tonight at 10.30 o'clock sharp. I will wait for you at Clemmer and Forty-second street.

A Friend

After he had finished reading it, the inspector again examined it carefully, holding it close to the light.

"How do you know this is the note Grummer sent?" he queried.

"I compared it with the tablet we found in his room," Wilkes said. "It's the identical paper. Also, the location is too near the right spot to

just happen so. Forty-second and Clemmer—that's where we found the dead body!"

"What does Gibbs say?"

"He denies ever having seen the note; says he never got it. He told me just what you did, that the engagement had been broken because of a quarrel. He claims he didn't leave your house until eleven o'clock, and that then he went straight to his club. But I'm getting ahead of my report. I must go back."

Sheridan nodded, signifying to Wilkes to tell his story in his own way.

"Naturally, my suspicions turned toward Gibbs. I hate to say these things to you, because of the personal connection, but you understand, I'm only trying to do my duty. I must say, that the further I have gone into this case, the blacker things look for him.

"In the first place, you know his temperament—easily excitable, inclined to be impetuous. Not that he isn't a fine enough young man, and all that; but I think you'll admit that he's just the sort to fly into a passion if anyone tried to slander the name of the girl he loved; especially, when it was a fellow like this Grummer.

"Then there's his actions. He arrived at the club all right, after leaving your home; I can't check up the time exactly, but it was somewhere between eleven and eleven-fifteen o'clock. And what did he do there? He proceeded to get fearfully and shamefully drunk—so bad that they had to call a taxi and send him home.

"The next thing we hear is that the engagement between your sister and him is busted, when the wedding is only a few weeks away. What's the reason for that? He says it was a quarrel, and so does Miss Geraldine. I'm not disputing your sister's word at all; but here's this note. How are you going to explain that?

"Gibbs says he never got it. Well, then, who did? He must have got it, for it was addressed to him and delivered at your house while he was there. The man who wrote it is found dead at the spot where he arranged to meet Gibbs. From every standpoint, it looks like a beautiful case. Gibbs, undoubtedly, is the man we want."

"I can't believe it," Sheridan protested. "Fred may be quick-tempered and a bit thoughtless, but he's not the man to murder another in cold blood."

"Not even for the girl he loved?" incredulously.

"No;" the inspector said slowly, "not even for that."

"Of course there are a few things in Gibbs's favor," Wilkes admitted. "He's hardly the man I'd pick out to do a trick like this for one reason—I don't think he's strong enough."

"How was Grummer killed?" Sheridan asked quickly.

"I haven't quite settled that yet, as I said before. I have my theory, but it would take a surgical operation to prove it. You remember the Gerdson case, where old Frank Gerdson was murdered for the diamond stud and the ring that he wore. He was found like Grummer—not a sign of a weapon, not a bloodstain, not a wound. Red Miller owned up to that, you know. He caught the old man in a dark place on the street,

threw one arm around his neck, with the fist tight against the back and the muscles of the biceps under the chin. At the same time, he backed up the old man's head and cut off his wind so that he couldn't holler.

"Then Miller lifted him off his feet by thrusting his hip, as a lever, against Gerdson's side. With his fist still pressed against the back of the neck, he swelled his biceps. Two seconds it took, Inspector, and the old man's neck was broke. It was just the same as if he had been hung by a noose. They garroted Gerdson; and that's the way Grummer met his death!"

A gleam of approval at the sergeant's enthusiasm flashed into the broad-shouldered inspector's eyes.

"But that's pretty hard to prove, isn't it?" he suggested kindly.

"That's the trouble," Wilkes confessed. "The doctors could find it, but they'd have to look for a tiny clot of blood right where the vertebra touches the base of the skull. I understand that's the only sign."

"You certainly don't think Gibbs did it?"

"He's not the man I'd expect to do a job like that. It takes a strong man and an expert, for it's got to be quick or the victim will break loose if he can and make an outcry."

"And Gibbs is not an expert."

"No, I wouldn't think so. Neither are his arms big enough. Of course, if he didn't do it, the case falls flat. He must be the man!"

"You said there were some points in his favor," Sheridan reminded him.

"Yes, there are—a few. For one thing, the messenger-boy can't identify him positively as the man who got the note. If he could, the case would be cinched. Frankie says the porch was dark, and he didn't make out the fellow's features. He swears that he found the right number, as directed, and made inquiry before handing over the note. The party who answered, he claims, replied that he was the man.

"At the same time he don't recognize Gibbs now, for we tried him. Of course that doesn't necessarily mean anything, one way or the other.

"Then there's the testimony of Miss Geraldine. I took the liberty of talking with her this morning, so as to round up every loose corner before turning in my report. She says Gibbs left about eleven o'clock that night; and corrobrates him in regard to the quarrel. It was a mighty delicate subject, so I didn't press it very far.

"She doesn't recall his going to the door during the evening. It seems they were in the music room about eight-thirty o'clock, and she was playing the piano, according to her recollection. He might have gone out and returned without her knowing it, as from the piano she couldn't see the place where he sat. He was over by the window—you know how the room is arranged.

"Miss Geraldine seemed a bit nervous when I called, but I laid it to the trouble she's been in over the engagement."

"Sis is badly broken up," Sheridan admitted.

"I suppose she must be. It might have been my fancy, but I thought as I sat there, that she was relieved over something, too; maybe she was glad to be rid of Gibbs."

"No, I don't agree with you;" the inspector interrupted. "She thought the world and all of him!"

"Well, I know I'm not much when it comes to figuring about a woman," Wilkes deplored. "They're too deep for me! But Miss Geraldine's testimony don't hurt Gibbs one bit. I can't reconcile it with his subsequent acts; the circumstances are certainly against him.

"He's my one best bet," he concluded, although of course different theories might be suggested. But if the dope against him won't stand the test, I don't see any other practical solution."

"Let's hear some of your other suggestions," Sheridan directed.

"They're hardly worth bothering you about," the sergeant demurred, apologetically, "and certainly not in any official report. I wouldn't menton them at all if you would listen to my theory on Gibbs. Sometimes I find, when I'm working on a case, that it's a good idea to decide on as many various possibilities as I can, and then eliminate all except the probability. Once in a while I hit upon some mighty interesting things.

"Look at this Grummer case. What if the messenger-boy went to Number 4604 instead of 4406? Or to 4046? Such would not be beyond the bounds of possibility. When one has studied Frankie Windmueller, a stunt like that becomes almost a probability. He's a trifle worse than the average boy in the business; I tested him by having a friend of mine send him on an errand and check him up. He not only got the names entirely mixed up, but also lost his message.

"If I wasn't going to handle the prosecution of the murderer of Grummer, I would work on the belief that the secret to the whole affair lies in this here little messenger-boy. But what can you do? He stoutly maintains that he went to the right place, found the right party, and delivered Grummer's note. You can't shake him either; for he's just wise enough to understand the importance to himself of the matter.

"So I investigated both 4604 and 4046 Clemmer street, Inspector; and especially 4046. You see that's just two blocks on the other side from Forty-second crossing where Grummer was found dead. The fact that the note was found between Forty-second and your house, however, would almost cut out any other locality unless one was dealing with an unusually clever and desperate criminal.

"I don't believe we have such in this case. Everything seems to point to the theory that Grummer was killed in a heated passion, by someone who was angry at an attempted slander or blackmail. I have framed this explanation and this motive from the note itself. And without going into details, I might say that I discovered that both those other addresses could be eliminated safely.

"There were other interesting conjectures. One, if you will excuse the reference, was that someone in your house, perhaps in your family, might have got the note instead of Gibbs. Of course, Inspector," he interjected hurriedly, "I'm merely outlining to you my different avenues of thought in trailing the affair to

Gibbs—I'm not presuming for a minute to say that any of them are true."

"I understand," said Sheridan. He smiled reassuringly at his inferior. "I won't be offended. Go on; you interest me."

Pleased at the inspector's approval, Wilkes elaborated his idea.

"Some things would have to be assumed under such a possibility—things which might seem unpardonable. For instance, we would have to work on the belief that Miss Geraldine had been preyed upon by this Grummer, who knew, or claimed to know, something of her former life which she dreaded. Shall I proceed?"

From the distant corridor a gong sounded, followed instantly by the shuffling of many feet. Shifts were changing; and in the medley of noises Sheridan's voice sounded faint and far away.

"Certainly, Sergeant; do so by all means."

"This Grummer may have followed her here, when he learned of her approaching marriage to Gibbs, and threatened her with exposure—tried to blackmail her. Such a thing would have worried her terribly. It might have been known to the other members of her family, or again, it might not. It probably would not be, although it's not really material.

"When Grummer found that she was determined not to listen to him, he may have decided, out of revenge, to break up the marriage. With that in view, he sends the note to Gibbs, and addresses it to Miss Geraldine's own home.

"Such a move would be devilish, for he might hope that Gibbs would read it in the girl's presence, and then, when she was confronted with the fulfillment of Grummer's threats, she might be compelled to treat with him.

"Here's where the messenger-boy would enter into the story. Suppose that he had been told to ask, before delivering his note: 'Does Mr. Sheridan live here?'

"That would be to make sure that he was at the right place. If he got an affirmative answer, he might have been instructed next to inquire: 'Is Mr. Frederick A. Gibbs here?'

"If he was told 'yes' to this also, then his orders might have been to turn over the note forthwith.

"Now imagine what would happen if he got the names mixed up and some member of the family came to the door. First he would ask: 'Does Mr. Frederick A. Gibbs live here?'

"The question would probably seem a joke to the person, whoever it was, and he might laugh a bit. Half-humorously he might say something like this: 'Mr. Gibbs? Well, he does—most of the time!'

"Then Frankie would speak up: 'Is Mr. Sheridan here?'

"If the person who was answering the bell happened to be your father, or—pardon me—even yourself, the reply might be : 'That's me.'

"Then the note might be handed in, and whoever received it might read it innocently before realizing its import, or that it was meant for someone else. Shall I proceed?"

Inspector Sheridan by this time betrayed his deep interest in the novel theory that his sergeant expounded. He leaned forward in his big chair

and followed closely every word. He frowned at the interruption.

"Why should you stop, Wilkes? Let's have the rest of it!"

"Well, under the circumstances I have just set out, there wouldn't be much left to tell. After reading the note, the person who got it would, of course, make up his mind to go out and see what this fellow had on his mind.

"He would meet Grummer, hear things which would seem the grossest lies, and then perhaps reveal his identity. He would tell Grummer that if he ever repeated those things again, he would kill him. The fellow might bluster; might refuse to obey; might even attempt to get some more money.

"There would probably be a scuffle and a blow would be struck. Then, before he realized it, our man's passions might be getting the better of him; he undoubtedly thought everything of Miss Geraldine and her happiness. In a flash, his hip would be against Grummer's side, his arm around the man's throat. Before he could break loose from the fury that mastered him, there would be a choking, guttural sound, and Grummer would relax in his arms."

Sheridan, his face immobile, sat like one in a trance. His heavy jaw rested on the palm of his hand; his eyes met those of Wilkes without flickering an eyelash.

"Why did you eliminate that possibility also, Sergeant?"

The question was crisp, sharp.

"Well, Inspector," Wilkes laughed, "I never seriously considered it. There were only your father and—yourself, in the family; and your father, while a big man, has not now the necessary strength. You would qualify as to build,"—he looked his chief over critically—"but of course you would have to be dropped at the outset. Your nature is such—you know what I mean—that you would be the last one in the world to lose your temper, to do such a thing. Then, too, are you not inspector of the police?"

"Of course," replied Sheridan.

Wilkes closed his notebook and rose to his feet wearily.

"Under the circumstances," he said, "I suppose there is nothing to do but to call it heart failure."

"I suppose so," the inspector agreed, still leaning forward on the edge of his desk.

"Just the same, I would like to find out who did it," Wilkes admitted. "I forgot to mention another thing in Gibbs's favor which would undoubtedly help to clear him. When we examined Grummer's body, we found some small pieces of cuticle under his finger nails."

"During the struggle, his arms were pinned above his head, but apparently he managed to scratch his assailant, while he was clawing around helplessly, before the muscles crushed against his neck. And Gibbs bore no marks of any sort. I inspected him myself."

"I guess that settles it, then," Sheridan said.

He relaxed from his tense position, lifting his jaw from the hand on which it had been propped, and withdrawing his arm.

As he did so, his coat-sleeve caught on the desk and pulled back. It revealed four strips of black court-

plaster extending lengthwise along the forearm almost to the wrist.

The big blue eyes of the sergeant seemed to widen a trifle, but the expression, whatever it was, flitted instantly.

Inspector Sheridan replaced the sleeve carelessly and glanced at Wilkes. He found the officer staring abstractedly out of the window at the cluster-lights along the avenue.

When he spoke, the sergeant roused himself with a visible effort.

"Heart failure, you said?"

"Yes, Chief."

"That's all just now, Sergeant. I'll call you if I want you."

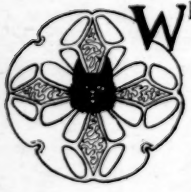
"All right, Chief."

Sergeant Wilkes touched his hat and smiled cheerfully. A second later, the door closed noiselessly behind him.

# Eva at Long Range

BY JESSIE E. HENDERSON

*Two wireless operators, one "red-haired and plump," began a wireless flirtation. The S. O. S. scream of a wounded and wallowing ship brings them together and spices with thrills a story full of laughs.*



WHEN Armstrong, the new wireless operator on the *Clio,* picked up Beachey Head each trip between New York and Havana, he used to exchange weather comments and baseball news with that post, as he did with the other operators at the coast wireless stations. And he used to begin many of his messages with "SA-OM," which means "Say, Old man—"

This touched the pride of the operator at Beachey Head. So one night when the *Clio* was ploughing northward under the big stars some hundred miles off shore, and Armstrong had preceded an observation about the temperature with his customary "SA-OM," Beachey Head interrupted rather pertly:

"MCF," which was the official title of Beachey Head, "NOT-OM."

A moment of silence followed this crackle of crisp Morse through the darkness. Of course the remark defied orders against "talking" except on business. But nearly all wireless operators are human, especially when business is dull.

The operator at Beachey Head tapped the key again. "IM-OLD-WOMAN," she added, by way of humorous explanation.

Evidently the *Clio* required a good deal of time to think the matter over. The call was dimmed by distance when later in the evening it slipped between a message from the *Arcady* and a query from Norfolk. But the message, though faint, brought a blush to the cheeks of Beachey Head as it clicked against her eardrums.

"HOW-OLD?" Armstrong inquired, not without pertness himself.

Beachey Head recognized this as a good-natured dig permitted by wireless freemasonry. But she considered it no harm to keep a man at his distance, even when the man was invisible and the distance about two hundred miles. So she tapped an answer of dignified irrelevance:

"GOOD-NIGHT."

If the *Clio* wanted to find out the age of MCF night operator, or anything else concerning her, she reflected that this would be an easy thing to do. Probably Armstrong had been the only wireless man in the regular fleet which steamed past the Head, who did not know that a woman was installed there. When she outranked all the men applicants in the examinations two years ago and received a post on the barren little wind-swept cliff as her reward, an explosion of astonishment had burst up and down the Atlantic seaboard. There were plenty of opera-

tors who could supply the *Clio* with details.

Armstrong apparently discovered a source of information. Twelve days later, as he picked up Beachey Head again on his way south, he called:

"SA-YL-CONGRATS!"

Beachey Head interpreted "YL" to mean "Young Lady," but sent a puzzled question: "WHY-CONGRATS?" For "congrats" meant "congratulations."

"CONGRATS-ON-RATS," clicked the *Clio*.

Beachey Head laughed aloud. So they had told him about her valiant battle. On an "off" night she had regaled some of the coastwise operators with an account of the mouse that invaded her office.

"HOW-IS-GINGER?" Armstrong inquired. Ginger was the cat imported after the mouse incident.

"GINGER-FINE," Beachey Head responded.

They exchanged barometer readings and other wireless "chicken feed" provided for by law. Then Armstrong teasingly repeated his query of twelve days ago: "HOW-OLD?"

Beachey Head answered promptly: "ABOUT-SIX-MONTHS."

"WHAT?" asked the *Clio*.

"GINGER-SIX-MONTHS," said Beachey Head.

A patter of messages from other vessels interrupted the two-hundred mile conversation. But after an hour or so, the *Clio* found a chance to get in a reply: "NOT-GINGER."

Beachey Head relayed a message to Boston before she answered with a mischievous smile: "NINETY-FIVE-YEARS."

"GOOD-NIGHT!" said the *Clio*.

Twelve days later, the steamer's call buzzed once more in the ears of "MCF," as Armstrong came up from Havana. "SA-YL——" Then a pause, followed by "HOW-ARE-YOU-MISS-EVA-KNOX?"

"FINE-THANKS-MISTER-ALBERT-ARMSTRONG," replied Beachey Head. For she, too, had sources of information upon which to draw.

From New York, Armstrong sent Miss Knox a picture postcard showing the *Clio* under way. From Havana, he sent a second card with a picture of Morro Castle. Miss Knox mailed him a picture postcard of the Beachey Head station. Armstrong sent Miss Knox his photograph. She sent him hers.

"SA-YL," began Armstrong on his next trip south. But Beachey Head paid no attention. She was listening to the call of the *Arcady*, on its way northward from Porto Rico.

"CAPTAIN-SENDS-LOVE-LITTLE-GIRL," came the message, thrice-repeated, from the *Arcady* aerial.

"BEST-LOVE," responded Beachey Head.

The *Clio* steamed onward, mute.

When the twelve days were gone and the *Clio* spoke again to Beachey Head, Armstrong carefully avoided any reference to the previous acquaintance. This policy, though he knew it not, told the Beachey Head operator a number of illuminating things. Among the rest, it told her that Armstrong's pride, or some-

thing, had prevented his making inquiries about the *Arcady*. She bit her lip as the *Clio* passed beyond range with no remark more personal than a baseball score. It had been pleasant to chaff across the waves with an operator who had a sense of humor, but if Mr. Albert Armstrong wanted to suppose—well, let him suppose, then.

His suppositions had apparently restored his temper, for when the *Clio* call came to Beachey Head as the steamer returned from New York, it began with a friendly "SA-YL," and ended with: "HOW-IS-YOUR-CAT?"

"FINE," replied Beachey Head, and added daringly: "DID-YOUR-GOAT-COME-BACK?"

The *Clio* asked for a repetition of the message.

"NEVER-MIND," replied Beachey Head.

The *Clio* insisted.

Business was slack that night, anyway. "I-THOUGHT-SOME-ONE GOT-YOUR-GOAT," Beachey Head ventured saucily.

Many miles the *Clio* steamed toward Havana before Armstrong, with burning face, decided to answer the impudent message. His inquiries had elicited a tantalizing semi-information. "WHO-IS-CAPTAIN-KNOX-OF-THE-ARCADY?" he clicked at last.

"HA!" spluttered Beachey Head. In the Morse code "HA" stands for "ha, ha!"

"YOUR-BROTHER?" persisted the *Clio*.

"FATHER," answered Beachey Head.

Armstrong's next note was given up to the regret that he could not leave the *Clio* long enough for a run down to Beachey Head. MCF did not answer this letter until the *Clio* came within earshot again. Then she said: "I-HAVE-RED-HAIR-ANYWAY."

The response was not so far beside the mark as it might appear. Miss Knox's photograph had not disclosed to Armstrong the fact that her hair was red. It had long been a sensitive point with her. She had tried to mention it, casually, in her notes, but never could seem to make the mention casual enough.

"I-LIKE-RED-HAIR," the *Clio* answered with a promptness that sent a glow to Beachey Head's heart and also to her face under its mane of ruddy curls. "Chicken feed" from other vessels and from other stations drifted between Armstrong and Miss Knox for some hours. Then Beachey Head caught the *Clio* buzz again, afar off and not very clear.

"I-HAVE-FR——"

Beachey Head asked for a repetition.

A brisk thunderstorm over New Jersey blurred the *Clio's* message, but Armstrong tried once more. Very slowly he tapped out the last word: "F-R-E-C-K-L-E-S."

Miss Knox bubbled a little laugh and glanced into the eyes of the photograph propped up on her desk. Then she turned crimson. Every listening operator within range had registered a simultaneous "HA" against her eardrums.

Armstrong's letter from New York informed her that he was trying to get leave of absence in order to visit

Beachey Head. But when the *Clio* picked up MCF on its way south again, Miss Knox had a long message to sandwich between storm warnings and stock market slumps. Her father had been transferred from the *Arcady* to the *Madelina,* and the *Madelina* would start next week on a fourteen-thousand-mile trip down through the straits of Magellan and up the Pacific Coast as far as Seattle, to enter the Alaskan trade. Miss Knox, by dint of much wire-pulling, had obtained the post of operator on her father's vessel.

"DO-NOT-GO," clicked the *Clio.*

Beachey Head clicked back: "MAY-NEVER-GET-ANOTHER-SUCH-CHANCE."

"PLEASE-DO-NOT-GO," the *Clio* repeated.

"WHY-NOT?" inquired Beachey Head.

"BECAUSE——" began the *Clio,* and did not finish the sentence. They had never met. It was absurd, of course. On the other hand, there is only one sentiment that thrives on impediments—and everyone knows what absence makes the heart do. Before Armstrong went out of range he suggested that at the *Madelina's* first stopping-place Miss Knox ought to watch for an important letter from Havana.

"YOU-BET!" snickered the eavesdropper down by Norfolk. The *Clio* abruptly ceased sending. But after a long interval, it called one last message, that had to travel over a great space of black water before it finally collided with the aerial at Beachey Head and slid down into Miss Knox's ears.

MCF sighed as she heard the message. It said—briefly: "SEE-YOU-LATER."

In due time the *Madelina* steamed out of New York harbor. She was a very old boat that had been repaired, repainted and renamed by a parsimonious firm, and sent forth to discover what she could earn in her declining years. The *Madelina* carried no passengers and but a scanty crew on the trip to Seattle. Therefore she did not need an assistant wireless operator such as passenger boats are required by law to take, and Miss Knox shared with Ginger the undisputed possession of the wireless office on the deck. The operator settled herself comfortably before the rows of bright metal handles and sent her first report to the owners, as the *Madelina* plodded down the coast.

It was the week of the Four-day hurricane, which is still mentioned with respect by Atlantic mariners, and on the second day out the old *Madelina* poked its nose into the thick of the gale. The deck was laden with coal in accordance with the owners' scheme of frugality, and the steamer slouched heavily through the solid green walls that flung themselves against the bow. Things were pretty topsy-turvy in the wireless cabin. Mr. Armstrong's photograph had to be tacked to the woodwork to keep it from diving under the table. More than once the white tip of a comber toppled over the rail and licked past the cabin door.

And one midnight, somewhere among the boiling seas off Cape Hatteras, the *Madelina* began falling to

pieces. Two plates strained apart a little above the waterline on the port side. Every time the *Madelina* rolled the split grew wider. As she dipped to port, the plates closed, but when she reeled to starboard, the seam wrenched open high in air and crest after crest hurled its tons of water against her gaping side.

At half past two in the morning Miss Knox awoke from a troubled sleep, to find her father in the wireless cabin. She sprang from her bunk with a start, bewildered by the crash of gale and waters in the hurrying darkness that pounded upon the cabin windows.

"See if you can get in touch with any vessel," her father suggested.

Miss Knox steadied herself against her bunk as the floor dropped slantwise from beneath her feet with the roll of the steamer. She reached for the sending key, but her father laid a hand gently on her shoulder and cleared his throat. His eyes glistened under the visor of his rubber cap. "I mean——" he began, and choked.

Miss Knox patted his hand, her lips blanching. "Shall I S.O.S.?" she asked, after a long moment.

The captain's face grew gray. It is not pleasant for an old man to admit that he cannot save his own ship; but he nodded.

There came a tearing noise of the spark, as the call for immediate help crackled from the *Madelina* aerial. It was audible even through the howl of the wind. But there was no response.

Miss Knox realized that down below, the men who watched the pumps were wondering if they could depend on the fingers and ears of the only woman aboard. She felt that they rather doubted whether they could. Trouble might be expected to follow a boat which carried a woman as wireless. Defiantly she tapped the key again. Another blue spark crackled from the masthead and fled across the ocean, searching out another masthead with inviting antennæ. It seemed a long while before a dull gray light dispersed the blackness of the world and stole in at the cabin window. It presaged another stormy day. Minute by minute she called, while the sea rushed into the *Madelina*.

Now and then an officer from below came to the cabin door. "Got anyone yet?" he would inquire.

"Not yet," Miss Knox replied, with a coolness assumed for the occasion. She did not look up as her aching wrist continued to tap the key. The roar of water and wind was deafening.

At last the chief engineer arrived, panting. "Better get some one quick, Miss Knox—if you get 'em at all."

"Why?" asked the operator.

"Water's creeping up to the dynamo," the chief explained.

Miss Knox half rose from her chair. But she sat down again quickly. It would not do to get flustered.

"When the water gets to the dynamo, the wireless won't last long," the chief proceeded with unnecessary definiteness. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with one big hand.

"How about the storage battery—the auxiliary?" asked Miss Knox.

"Not first class," replied the chief laconically; "might last a few hours."

"Wrap something around the dynamo," Miss Knox urged. "Got any canvas?"

The chief vanished, but after a little while he reappeared. "Water's got the dynamo," he reported; "you're on the storage battery now."

"All right," said the operator, who had to shout in order to be heard, and threw him a ghastly little smile as she pressed down the key again.

The chief gazed at her in frank admiration. "I been through worse blows than this," he lied gallantly; "there's no need to be frightened."

"I'm not," said the operator. She could lie as gallantly as anyone. But she rather overdid it when she added, "I've seen bigger surf at Beachey Head."

Lower and lower, the *Madelina* settled, shivering as the waves beat against her wounded side. Long ago the last bag of coal had been swept over the rail, but the old craft was too far gone to feel any relief from the lightening of her burden. The engine rooms were afloat, and the greatest exertion of the pumps could not check the tide that rose nearer the furnace grates. Upward the water lapped—a sixteenth of an inch—an eighth. There was little to be hoped from the lifeboats in this weather. The *Madelina* could not live till sunset.

For fifty minutes the white-lipped operator sent the "S.O.S." It hissed in vain across a wild waste of leaden billows that rose and fell with monotonous violence underneath the leaden clouds. Then Miss Knox began to get blurred fragments from vessels a long way off. Fatally distant they were, these craft that tried to catch her message and to send coherent replies through the blanket of "static" that clogged the air.

Half a dozen confused calls ran into each other and defeated their own purpose. From the resultant jangle Miss Knox thought she could pick out the stronger buzz of a land station near Charleston, which seemed to be dispatching a revenue cutter to the *Madelina's* assistance. Miss Knox gave a grim laugh. It was strange to drown with the knowledge that a small fleet was hurrying to one's aid. She did not deceive herself. Any vessel that was too far away for unbroken communication was too far away for any use.

"They won't even be in time for the funeral," she thought, with a tiny shudder.

It is a good law which requires passenger steamers to carry two wireless operators, so that the switchboard may never be vacant. But the law does not suggest any remedy when the assistant operator contracts fever and retires, delirious, to his bunk. This is what had happened on the nearest steamer, which rolled along—deaf and mute—some ninety miles away. The first operator was weary. He planned to sleep late. But the delirious cries of his assistant in the stateroom next door woke him. Idly he "listened" at his instrument. And he heard something.

It was the faint, far click of the *Madelina's* drowning cry:

"S.O.S.!—S.O.S.!—S.—O.—S.—"

Back to the ears of the *Madelina* operator came presently a small "qrrk—quorrk—qrrk." It sounded like a

pin-scratch on paper but it meant that the *Clio* was ready to change her course and start with all speed to the rescue.

Would the wireless work long enough to give the *Clio* directions? Miss Knox put the question from her with a determined pressure of the lips.

"WHERE - ARE - YOU?" asked the *Clio*.

The *Madelina* gave her position by dead reckoning. Because of the cloudy weather no sun observations had been taken for several days, and therefore the *Madelina* was not sure of her location.

"BE-MORE-DEFINITE," replied the *Clio*.

"IMPOSSIBLE," was the *Madelina's* brief response.

For several seconds the *Clio's* wireless maintained a significant silence. It is not an easy job to find a sinking vessel in thick weather, distance uncertain, direction problematical. Then Captain Knox had an inspiration, which he communicated to the captain of the *Clio*.

His daughter tapped out the message:

"SUPPOSE-WE-TAKE-GREENWICH-TIME - ON - OUR - CHRONOMETERS - BOTH - TAKE - IT-AT-SAME-MOMENT. THEN-EXCHANGE-READINGS."

The captain of the *Clio* suggested a set of signals. "PUT-MAN-OUTSIDE-YOUR-CABIN," he said. "WHEN - YOU - WAVE - YOUR - HANDS - AS - YOU-READ-CHRONOMETER-LET-HIM-PASS-ON-SIGNAL - TO - MAN - OUTSIDE - WIRELESS - ROOM-THEN-LET - THIS-MAN-SIGNAL-OPERATOR AND - I - WILL - DO - SAME."

Very soon, the man who balanced on the slippery deck outside Miss Knox's cabin, gave a shout—"Now!" Miss Knox sent a swift message to the *Clio* and heard the *Clio* buzz at her ears. In a few moments the *Clio* knew the *Madelina's* longitude and guessed at her latitude.

"AM-STEERING - FOR-YOUR-APPROXIMATE - POSITION," said the captain of the *Clio*.

"WILL - STEER - TOWARD - YOU," replied Captain Knox.

The two vessels started blindly for each other through the curling seas. In the dark weather, either of them might get ten miles to one side. This meant that the two would pass without knowing it. Miss Knox drew a deep breath. There was nothing but guesswork now.

Once each minute, the wireless cabins spoke, ignoring the cloud of fainter buzzes from ships that would come too late. Indeed, there seemed scant hope of the *Clio* arriving in time. Miss Knox hinted this doubt.

"PLENTY - TIME," Armstrong replied, and then after a moment: "ARE-YOU-SCARED?"

"NO," crackled Miss Knox—an answer which did not fool Armstrong any more than it had fooled the chief engineer. She added: "BUT-GINGER-IS."

"HA," buzzed the *Clio*. Somehow, the Morse laughter gave Miss Knox new courage.

The *Clio* came at top speed, as fast as the coal could be stoked and converted into steam. The floundering *Madelina* did her best. When Miss Knox glanced out of her window

again, she saw that it was broad day—a cloudy, threatening day of gray and green. Hours must have passed since the steamer's first call for help. It would be hours more before the *Clio's* smoke blew across the horizon. But with each hour the *Clio's* call grew stronger as Armstrong came nearer. There was a flutter in Miss Knox's throat that did not arise from peril. They had never seen each other. It was likely that they might never see each other. And yet——

The steward, the first officer, the chief engineer, all visited her cabin during the long forenoon with gifts of sandwiches and coffee. Miss Knox reported the visits to Armstrong.

"TRYING-TO-KEEP-ME-GOOD-TEMPER," she commented. "THEY-NEED-NOT-WORRY-I-WILL-NOT-QUIT-TILL-BATTERY-DOES."

"GOOD-STUFF," said the *Clio*.

But at noon a most disturbing message reached Miss Knox. The *Clio* had reached the spot which the *Madelina* designated as her possible location—and there was no vessel in sight. Dismay gripped the *Madelina* operator, exhausted by her vigil. And at the same moment, the battery that fed the wireless began to lose its strength.

"SLIGHT-ERROR," the [illegible] remarked cheerfully, MOVE-FORWARD."

The *Madelina* obeyed, wallowing. The wireless cabin tilted toward the bows at a curious angle. Somewhere the *Clio* raced on. Armstrong told Miss Knox that the captain had stationed men aloft, with a promise of a reward to the first one who sighted the cripple.

"DECK-AWASH," said the *Madelina* at last. The message was faint. And after a considerable interval: "GUESS-GOOD-BYE-NOW-MISTER-ARMSTRONG."

"NO-NO," crackled the *Clio*.

"GUESS-YES," answered the *Madelina*, drearily, "MANY-THANKS——"

Armstrong, heedless that all the world might hear him, pounded out a message and sent it at random into the gray void:

"EVA-EVA-EVA——"

There was no reply.

"EVA," the *Clio* called again, "EVA-EVA——"

Into Armstrong's ears came the ghost of an answer.

"D-E-A-R-B——" And silence.

A man at the *Clio* masthead shouted. Feet raced along the deck. The *Clio* wireless blazed another message:

"ARE-YOU-A-WHITE-SHIP?"

Armstrong thought he caught the two taps that signify "yes."

She was head down in the water, the poor old *Madelina*, when the *Clio* edged up to leeward and sent the long-oared lifeboats swirling to her side. Through his glasses, Armstrong saw a group of men on the heaving deck. He noticed a tall officer—the captain—and a woman who would not leave until he did. In her hand she held a bag, which, as Armstrong rightly conjectured, held the frantic Ginger.

There was an eternity of jostling up and down, of perilous dashes toward the half-swamped vessel, and

of fending away from it, before the lifeboats—now swept high on a wave tip, now hurled to the depths of the sea—began their painful journey back to the *Clio*. When they had covered half the distance, the *Madelina* gave a great dive and slowly dropped from sight.

But Armstrong bestowed on the *Madelina* scarcely a glance. He was watching a red-haired, plump little girl, who crouched in one of the boats. As it approached, the girl picked him out, where he stood apart from the group at the rail—and looked up into his eyes.

# Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

It is hard to make a girl believe it in summer, but the only cure for ingrowing calves is an opaque petticoat.

The only time advertising doesn't pay is when you advertise for a wife.

Some men are born mean and others grow up and buy motorcycles.

It might help some if we would let the dogs alone for one summer and muzzle the men.

A man thinks he can throw a fit because the laundry turns the neckband of his shirt into a saw. But he is a mere piker compared with the woman who finds the baby ribbon missing from her corset cover.

Before marriage he can't live without her. After marriage he can't live with her.

The main difference between the costume worn by Eve and some of the costumes worn by her daughters today, is that fig leaves are not transparent.

Most girls are aware that love is blind. That's the reason they put the powder on so thick that you can taste it.

If Temptation is pretty and has a few out curves, a man may flee from her, but he will wait around the corner until she catches up with him.

When a woman has been married long enough she never remembers her wedding anniversary. But she never forgets wash day.

The School of Experience confers but one honor and no man has so far won it. It is a halo to be worn by those who mind their own business.

A girl's idea of hard luck is to have the street car company lower the steps on the cars just about the time she gets the silk stockings she saved up for six months to buy.

The most uncertain thing in the world is a sure thing.

When there are women in an elevator, a bald-headed man thinks that any male person who takes off his hat is a sissy.

When a woman marries a man she can't love, she usually loves a man she can't marry.

A fool man couldn't guess within three inches of the size of a girl's foot by looking at her shoes.

When a man takes his wife to the theatre, he thinks that he goes out between acts. But she thinks he comes in between drinks.

Nowadays, some women imagine they are old-fashioned if they wear the same complexion twice.

When it comes to girls and race horses, you have to play both on form and trust to luck.

When a girl has bony ankles, she gets a lot of comfort out of the reflection that they are not that way farther up.

Everybody but his mother knows that you are a liar, when you say that the baby looks like his father.

The slit and silhouette skirts have given a lot of Prodigal sons the idea that they are veal inspectors.

If we could read one another's thoughts, there would be a hospital at every corner.

# A Game of Justice

BY OMAR CHRISTY

*Gun-men of the West still "stick-up" trains in the movies, but this account of a hold-up with Belasco settings is new and refreshingly different.*

OUTSIDE, in the darkness, the rain beat heavily upon the moving train with a dreary monotony that palled on the passengers and made them dull and uncomfortable. It was a two hours' ride to Pocalla, and the occupants of the car settled themselves for the weary ride. A quiet little woman in black, sitting alone, coughed painfully and took a swallow of medicine from a bottle. Coming in from the smoking car, a travelling salesman dropped into a seat beside a large, prosperous-looking Westerner, and opened conversation at random.

"Tough night," he remarked.

"Sure is," returned the Westerner. "Cold rain, too. May be sleet before morning."

"Tough country, also," observed the salesman.

"Yep! Pretty wild around here. Nothing but hills for a hundred miles in every direction."

"Live out here?" the salesman asked.

"I'm sheriff of the next county. My name's Braddon—James Braddon."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Braddon," said the other genially. "I'm Wilson, jewelry man. Have a card?"

The sheriff glanced at the address curiously.

"Big firm," he noted. "I suppose you carry pretty valuable samples?"

"Well," Wilson laughed, "I've got a ten state territory."

"Whew!" the sheriff whistled softly. "Aren't you afraid of being robbed?"

A small, sharp-eyed man just behind them leaned forward a little. The old lady coughed harshly again, and changed her position restlessly.

"There are no robbers nowadays," replied the salesman. "All the thieves have turned grafters and made enough money to retire on."

"Oh, I don't know about that," corrected the sheriff. "I'm after a bandit now that held up a Union Southern train down at Fire Peak last week."

The little man behind leaned farther over and touched the sheriff. The big fellow started and looked around quickly. The sharp-eyed person took in every detail of the officer's face in one comprehensive glance.

"Well?" questioned the Westerner.

The other settled back in his seat. "I just wanted to remark," he said, "that the lady opposite has a very bad cough."

The sheriff regarded her attentively. "Indeed she has," he agreed; and as that seemed to be all that was expected of him, he turned back and con-

tinued the conversation with the salesman.

The train sped swiftly on through the rain. The passengers gradually lapsed into silence, some of them dozing, others reading, and the two occupants in front of the little man lowered their tones. There was a short flash of lanterns outside and a vision of wagons and tents, passing as quickly as it appeared.

"That's Willard's construction camp," informed the sheriff. "We're getting into the hills proper now." He hesitated a second. "Would you mind changing seats with me?" he asked.

The salesman moved over to the window, and Braddon seated himself next the aisle.

A few miles farther on, the engine whistled shrilly, and there was a hiss of brakes as the train decreased its speed. In the light from the windows there showed a white sign-post painted with black letters:

DANGER! SLOW DOWN TO
8 MILES AN HOUR

The old lady started up nervously as the whistle shrieked, and the man behind the officer gripped something in his coat pocket firmly. The sheriff drew his feet closer under him and adjusted his coat very deliberately.

"Devil's Curve," he remarked laconically.

The train wound slowly around the sharp angle of the rails at a pace that was scarcely more than a crawl, and it was not until the last coach was on straight track that the engineer dared to open his throttle. Hardly had the curve been passed when there was a crash of glass in the vestibule, and a masked man stood in the doorway with a heavy pistol in his hand. With a quick movement, he covered the passengers,waving his free arm significantly.

"Hands up!" he cried. "Every one of you."

There was a quick rustle of surprise, but all obeyed, including the sheriff. The sharp-eyed man sank very low in his seat, but his hands were in the air. He kept his gaze on Braddon, whose right hand suddenly dropped. The bandit's gun clicked ominously as he leveled it full at the officer's face.

"None of that! Put up your arm."

The sheriff hesitated, then raised his hand. To everyone's wonder, the bandit pointed at the jewelry man.

"You first," he said. "Step out."

The salesman did so.

"Walk down the aisle towards me, but keep your hands above your head. Be quick about it!"

When the man was within reach of him, the robber stepped forward and dexterously ran his left hand through the other's clothes, extracting a jewel-case and a roll of bills.

"Go back to your seat," he ordered; then motioned to another passenger. "You're next. Get a move on!"

In like manner he searched the majority of the occupants, taking them one at a time without regard to location, apparenty choosing them at random or else with intention. Suddenly he nodded at the Westerner.

"Your turn now. Walk up!"

The officer made his way slowly down the car and stood face to face

with the masked man. The bandit put his gun against his side and thrust his fingers in the other's coat. The car swayed slightly, and the sheriff leaned sideways as if to hold his balance. The outlaw shifted the gun, and instantly the officer struck his arm with such force that the pistol dropped to the floor. The robber struggled, but almost before the onlookers knew what had happened, he was handcuffed and a prisoner.

"Well, I got you this time," grunted the officer, flashing his star.

The passengers dropped their arms with relief. The sharp-eyed man put his hand in his pocket and crept to the edge of the seat.

With a sweep of his arm, the sheriff tore the mask from the bandit's features.

"Let's see your face," he ordered sternly.

There was a sudden scream, and the old lady rose up in her seat.

"It's my son," she cried, "Walter!"

The outlaw sprang back and covered his face. The old lady came down the aisle and touched him.

"Walter, my boy," she said, her voice quivering, "why is this?"

He shrank back, but she caught his arm. The sheriff stepped aside in amazement.

"What in thunder!" ejaculated the officer. "Is this true?" he demanded of the unmasked bandit.

The other nodded. "It was to have been my last," he said slowly. "I—I guess it will be."

His mother stroked his face tenderly. "I trust you, Walter," she whispered. "Tell me."

He put his arms around her and looked questioningly at the sheriff.

"Go ahead," said the Westerner. "We're fifty miles from Pocalla, so you have plenty of time."

"Well, you see," commenced the outlaw, "I was green when I came to this country, and I got in with a bad bunch. Pretty soon, I got to drinking, and when I drank, I gambled, and when I played, I lost money, so that it wasn't very long until I was too deep to even dream of getting out honestly. I wasn't worrying much, though, because I figured I could jump the country when my credit wasn't good any more; but then I got a letter from my mother saying she was coming out to see me and hoping I would be glad to see her. When I read that, I straightened up and came to my senses with a jolt. I had a lot of gambling debts that it was impossible for me to pay, and I knew that if I skipped out my mother would soon know all about it; and I didn't want her to find it out, so I hit upon this method as the quickest way to make good. I held up the train at Fire Peak, but I didn't get enough to pay everything. I thought I would get the rest of it to-night and settle up my debts to-morrow. I didn't expect her for two or three days more."

The passengers, who had listened intently, leaned forward breathlessly. The sheriff surveyed the crowd anxiously for a few moments, then cleared his throat nervously.

"Young man," he said huskily, touching his prisoner on the shoulder, "how much do you need?"

"Six hundred dollars," replied the bandit in surprise.

The Westerner faced the travelers and held up his hand for attention.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he uttered, slowly, "I place my official position in your hands. If I heed this young fellow's story and let him escape at the next curve, will you every one promise never to mention this incident to anyone? I will see that your valuables are returned before he leaves."

There was a surprised silence for a space, then a murmur of assent.

"And, furthermore," continued the sheriff, "I propose that a donation be made to help him get a new start, for his mother's sake. I myself will contribute fifty dollars."

There was a moment's hesitation before any one offered. Wilson, the salesman, was the first to speak.

"I'll make it a hundred," he said.

"And another hundred for me," chimed in an elderly man from the rear; "I had a son once."

"Twenty for me," added another.

"Here, also."

"I'll put in thirty-five."

In a short time, much more than the required amount had been promised. The sheriff carefully returned everything the bandit had taken, less the amounts that had been donated.

" My friends," he said, "you understand, of course, that every one of us has broken the laws of this state in regard to the aiding and abetting of a prisoner's escape; but I, as an officer of this same law, am doubly guilty. Therefore, I beg of you to never, under any circumstances, mention this night's happenings to any person. I believe I can trust you fully, and I hope that no unpleasant consequences will result to any one. Just a few miles farther there is a steep upgrade where the prisoner can easily drop off while the train is moving. I will now release him."

There was a sudden commotion in the center of the car.

"I wouldn't rush things if I were you," suggested the sharp-eyed man, stepping into the aisle and calmly levelling a gun full at the Westerner's head. "When I travel in the company of train robbers, I prefer that bracelets should be part of their standard equipment. Drop that key."

The passengers sat stunned; but the old lady turned instantly, drew a revolver from her dress, and fired. The little man ducked, and there was a tinkle of glass behind him. Before she could pull the trigger the second time, he shattered her arm with a bullet, and her gun fell at her feet. In a tenth of a second he covered the Westerner again, and advanced upon him.

"I guess I'd better handcuff you," he remarked, skilfully doing so. "I hated to shoot your lady friend, but she was too reckless with that cannon, so I had to use the quickest method.

"That's right; now you three stand here together while I tie you so you can't get separated. Thanks. You may be seated now, and I will return these kind people their donations."

The two men cowered in silence, but the woman nursed her hand and cursed vehemently.

"Keep quiet, madam," he com-

manded. "You played a great game, but you lost, and the less fuss you make, the easier you'll get off. I guess if I hadn't been on the job, you would have made a success of it. That collection idea was a good one; you would have been half way across the continent before these poor dupes discovered they had been buncoed."

The jewelry salesman arose.

"Say," he cried, "who the deuce are you, anyway?"

"My name is Braddon," returned the little fellow, easily, exposing his badge—"James Braddon. I'm sheriff of this county."

The Black Cat

# The Making of the Fourth League

BY LEWIS ALLEN

*How an ingenious crook was foiled by the timely intervention of a "fair one" in his attempt to form a fake ball league, and thereby gain possession of an unsuspecting Klondiker's "pile," proves the old adage, "He laughs best who laughs last."*

LUCKY BRACKLIN was coming East. Everybody knew it from the Klondike to Broadway. The Saskulask brass band had inharmoniously proclaimed his departure and golden eagles marked his progress; each seeming larger and gaining in importance as the coast faded and the effete East, the East of blasé Broadway, loomed up along the trail of the "Daphne," his private car.

Everybody knew of Bracklin, knew of the avalanche of pure luck that had heaped mammoth nuggets of virgin gold round about him, but only one man in all Broadway really knew "Lucky" Bracklin personally—"Chet" Corrigan, his pal of Goldfield gambling days.

"On my way to your settlement to do Broadway and to see real baseball," Bracklin had wired Corrigan from Seattle.

Corrigan read and re-read this wire. Then he turned to the newspapers and read and re-read the stories of Lucky Bracklin, whose fortune was variously estimated at anywhere from a million to a billion or so—depending upon the imagination of the telegraph editor. Result: many sleepless nights while awaiting his coming, planning big plans and scheming gigantic schemes.

Chet could use any quantity of that Klondike gold to very good personal advantage.

The Twentieth Century Limited that carried Bracklin eastward was a snail in Chet's opinion.

Traveling private had soon palled upon the active mind of the Klondiker. After leaving Buffalo he wandered for the twentieth time into the regular train.

"What are you going to do in New York, Mr. Bracklin?" asked the friendly conductor.

"Two things, friend, two things. First off I'm goin' to hit the trail up and down Broadway so swift that all the natives will run out of their shacks to see me go by; the second, baseball. I ain't seen a good game of baseball for near fifteen years. Every six months or so, we used to get a few newspapers up to Saskulask and I'd read about the games. I tried to get up a team among the

half-breeds. I made a good ball out of some old socks and a piece of leather, but every time I tried to teach any of 'em to catch it they'd run away, and when I hewed out a bat and tried to teach 'em to throw the ball to me, none of them dast do it for fear I'd shoot 'em. Yes sir, I'm sure goin' to see some real baseball."

"You'll see plenty of good baseball if you want to, Mr. Bracklin, but don't try to tear up Broadway street —at least, not with that outfit. They may think Buffalo Bill's in town. Don't be offended——"

"No offense at all, friend. That's just what I wanted to hear. I'll get the right kind of clothes before I've been in the big town forty-eight hours. Tell me, what's the best durned hotel?"

"The Greater Grand," the conductor informed him without hesitation.

"Friend!" exclaimed Bracklin, shaking the conductor's hand, "you come up to the Greater Grand any time after next week and you won't know me."

There was every evidence of sincerity in the conductor's promise.

At Harmon, where the electric engines are put on, one of the road officials hopped aboard to learn Mr. Bracklin's pleasure as to the disposal of the Daphne.

"Is your stay in New York to be long, Mr. Bracklin?" asked the official.

"You got me. It all depends. If I don't like the way the village is run or if I don't get to see enough baseball, I may beat it right back to Saskulask. You see, I still got a few pretty good bets up there."

"Then, of course, you prefer to have your car where you may get it at a few hours' notice."

"Just the idea, friend. That's what I want."

The official smiled, not at Mr. Bracklin, but reminiscently, of others who had come to Broadway.

When Bracklin wandered out into the maze at Grand Central, he was dazed for a moment, but the onslaught of taxi-barkers awoke him to action.

"Take me to the Greater Grand Hotel, young feller," he ordered, and climbed into the nearest taxi. He was whirled two blocks east, two blocks west, and then to the Greater Grand. Even then but a few minutes had elapsed.

"Eighty cents."

"Buy yourself a new buggy, young feller," Bracklin said laughingly, thrusting a bright eagle into the chauffeur's outstretched hand. "You fellers work too cheap here in this berg."

One second before he had registered, there was absolutely no interest shown in the arrival of James J. Bracklin. Four minutes and a half after he had scrawled "J. J. Bracklin, Saskulask," across the page, the head clerk, the room clerk, the bookkeeper, the assistant clerk, the assistant manager and three bell-boys were flocking about Bracklin's room, making obeisance and suffusing their expectant countenances with ingratiating smiles.

"Chuck that in the iron box for me," he ordered the assistant manager, tossing him a package from the inside pocket of his flapping frock

coat. "There's a hundred of 'em—all thousands—I don't like paper money, anyway."

All this on a beautiful June morning, and as the functionaries at the Greater Grand dispersed, the clock hand indicated 11.45 A.M.

"I'll wash up a bit, I reckon," said Bracklin. The chief bell-boy and two assistants rushed to turn on the hot water and get towels ready. Fifteen minutes later, Bracklin was downstairs again, wandering about the gilt-arched foyer, while many were secretly pointing him out and whispering, "that's Lucky Bracklin, the chap who found a solid gold mountain up in Alaska."

At the telephone desk, the operator, a big-eyed blonde girl, with a curl over her left eye, lowered "Violetta the Forsaken," turned down the corner of the page, and watched him with cool interest.

"Sis," said Bracklin, sweeping off his felt hat, "do you reckon Chet Corrigan's name is in that book?" pointing his thumb at the telephone book.

"Reckon it——" The girl was going to tell him to reckon it out for himself, but she could see that Bracklin was neither fresh nor lazy, and she changed her mind.

"I suppose that Chet stands for Chester?" she asked, turning to the C's in the telephone book.

"Wouldn't bet on it, tho' I knew Chet Corrigan for some years a spell ago, and I never heard him called anything but Chet. I want him to pilot me up to the ball park. I don't suppose you happen to know if there's a game today?"

The big-eyed blonde girl looked at him in amazement for a moment. Could it be possible that any one in this enlightened age was ignorant of the fact that a baseball game *was* to be played in New York today?

"Sure; the Giants——"

"Thunderation! I want to see *white* men play ball. Ain't them Cuban Giants dead yet?"

The big-eyed blonde girl stared, though the color suffused her cheeks.

"Don't kid me," and she dropped the 'phone book with a bang.

Simultaneously a man rushed across the corridor.

"Jim Bracklin! I'll be——"

The Klondiker wheeled, to see a dapper little man of about forty grinning like an Eskimo and grasping his hand.

"Chet Corrigan, you little cuss, how'd you know where I was at?"

"Knew you'd make for the swellest place in town, and so I've been laying for you. Didn't want anyone to get in and sell you any fake gold mine stock."

Chet grinned happily as Bracklin turned to the telephone girl.

"Thought I was kiddin', eh? Well, Sis, seein' as how I beat you to findin' Chet, you needn't hunt, here—" and slapping a gold eagle on the desk he walked away, toward the café.

The big-eyed blonde girl blinked at the golden coin. "Cuban Giants—well, he'll be buying mining stock, sure!"

At the bar, the Goldfield days had a brief inning. Bracklin was thinking about the game. He wouldn't listen to any other talk.

"We'll chew over those ghosts tomorrow; I want to see a good game

of real ball—and the good old boys."

It was the last day of the World Series and Chet was thinking rapidly. Lucky Jim had too much ready money to pass him around promiscuously, that was a cinch. He must pocket him until all the big ones got out of town. It wouldn't do to let him jump right into a big league game and then tell him that was the end. Suddenly a big idea was born in the gambler's head. It was so big that it almost cracked his cranium to hold it in.

"Say, Jim, suppose you want to unpack your togs——"

"Togs? I want to pack 'em up and get rigged out in some regular clothes. Lead me to a real place and I'll buy up a weddin' outfit. I must be right when I go to the ball game."

Corrigan breathed easier. It couldn't be said that he kept him away from the big game, and so the pair went on a tour of investment, Corrigan nursing his big idea, and Lucky Bracklin buying everything that met his fancy.

Twenty-four hours worked wondrous changes. It was a different appearing Bracklin, sartorially, from the one who arrived in his private car "Dap-hah-nee." Bracklin wore a suit of shepherd's plaid, a large horseshoe diamond adorned his tango-red tie, gray spats hugged the uppers of his omelette-hued shoes, and he leaned back in his silken shirt sleeves, in a red morocco chair, in the suite de luxe at the Greater Grand. With his index finger, the warped nail of which a manicurist had failed to civilize, he laboriously followed the sporting page.

Chet Corrigan paced the room in deep thought. While Bracklin yearned to see real baseball, Corrigan yearned for the big idea,—the idea that would waft speedily but painlessly, a large section of Bracklin's riches into his itching palm.

'Say, Chet," exclaimed the Klondiker, his brows furrowed in thought, as he looked up from the paper, "this here Mathewson, and Chase, and Wilson, whoever heard of them? What I want to know is where's all the *real* baseball players? You know who I mean, old Charlie Radbourne, Buck Ewing, Charlie Bennett, and them fellers?"

Chet Corrigan was looking affectionately at Bracklin. The big idea was becoming simple.

"How about old Pop Anson, and Jim McCormick; yes, and Jimmie Galvin; and say, how about King Kelly, you know,—good old 'Slide-Kelly-Slide'? Them was the ball players who *could* play ball, not these young kids no one ever heard about. Say, Chet, what has become of 'em?"

The smile on Corrigan's face was sweet to see. He drew up a chair and seated himself in front of Bracklin, the big idea flowering.

"I'll tell you Jim, you've always been square and I hate crooked business like an Injun hates water. I might as well tell you the truth; we're pretty much ashamed of conditions, but what can we do?"

"Well, dig into it, Chet."

"It's like this," and Corrigan looked truly grieved. "All them good old-time baseball players are simply crazy to get into the game again."

"Why in thunder don't they? Anybody with sense enough to wear his

hat on his head would be mighty glad to see 'em play."

'Sure, Jim, but to tell you the truth, they're up against a pretty rotten deal. They're froze out, every single one of 'em."

"Froze out? What in Halifax do you mean, Chet?"

Corrigan straightened up, rested his index finger in the palm of his right hand and proceeded to explain.

"Of course Jim, when I come to remember, it's natural you wouldn't know about this, being up in the Klondike ten years or more, and so I'm going to tell you just what a rotten deal the good old-time players have been getting since the trust deal. When I said they were froze out I was telling you the exact truth. You know they had a couple leagues, the Americans and the Nationals. Well, sir, those two leagues proved to be nothing more than a big baseball trust. Why, John D. and his oil, is a piking, non-competitive little cross-roads merchant compared to the baseball situation today, when it comes to the Czar business."

"'Base-ball trust'? Never heard of such a thing, and besides, even if there was, they just naturally tie up the big cards. Why——"

"You don't understand," said Chet softly; "'t's like this, Jim. We used to buy meat at twelve cents a pound. It was mighty good meat, too. You remember it. Then the trust got hold of it and what do we pay today? I'll tell you; we pay about thirty cents a pound for it and it's mighty poor stuff at that. That's what a trust does. Just now they've started up another league—the Federals. That makes three of 'em, and they've got baseball tied up so tight that you can't move a finger. Look here, Jim, why should these baseball magnates hire such high-priced men as Charlie Radbourne or Buck Ewing, or Casey or Kelly?"

"So's I'd come East to see some real baseball."

"Why should they hire such high-priced fellows as them," continued Chet, now letting out the line. "These baseball magnates have tied up everything. They own all the baseball grounds and they control all the players that they want to control, and let me tell you, they don't care a continental hoot for *baseball*. They're in it for the good old long green and nothing else, and they've got it tied up so tight that they can work these young kids, and you got to see them or nothing."

"Do you mean to tell me that the people stand for shuttin' out Kelly, Galvin and all the good ones?"

"What can they do?" There was a deep sorrow in Corrigan's tone.

"Do? Why, you little pin-head,—start a baseball league of their own, these fellers like you, that are wise to this crooked business."

Corrigan shook his head in deep gloom; in fact, he seemed about to burst into tears.

"What's to hinder?"

Corrigan sighed and sat down again. "That's all right for a guy like you to talk like that, but it costs too much money, Jim."

"Does it?" asked Bracklin, looking disappointed.

"Oh, take a lucky guy like you," Corrigan explained hastily, "and it

would be a cinch,—a regular pastime; you'd be having all the fun and making a bushel of money. You see, we fellows who know how this baseball trust is putting it over on us, would go ahead and form a league in a minute if we could afford it, and there'd be a big fortune in it. You don't stop to think, you big lucky cuss, that none of us has been wheeling a barrel of solid gold nuggets into his woodshed every night for ten years." Corrigan stood up, faced Bracklin very impressively and, as he spoke, pounded the palm of his right hand with his clenched fist.

(It was very evident that the bobbin was disappearing.)

"If I had one thousandth of your coin, Jim Bracklin, I'd make these baseball magnates the sickest bunch of boobs in the world. I'd have a league that would stretch across the country. I'd have schedules for every city, and I'd have all the real players in that league, none of your young bean-bag tossers, but the real old boys who used to pound out home runs every inning and keep the grandstand and bleachers in an uproar from beginning to end!" Corrigan waxed more and more enthusiastic.

(The bobbin went under the surface.)

"You know what I'd do, Jim Bracklin? I'd take Pop Anson, and Jim McCormick, and Jimmie Galvin, and Kelly, and Casey, and Charlie Bennett, and Buck Ewing, and Charlie Radbourne, and a dozen others of them good old-timers, and I'd divide them up and scatter 'em around through the different teams, so that every day throughout the ball season, in every city, all the fans would have a chance of seeing not only the real old genuine baseball, but two or three of them good old fellers who've been crowded out by the trusts."

(A complete launching of the great idea.)

Corrigan wiped his perspiring brow. Then he took a deep breath and continued:

"Think of it, Jim! Think of the excitement that would make! Think of the hundreds of thousands just like you and me, who would fight to get into the game; and say, wouldn't it make these baseball trust fellers sick?"

Bracklin stared at Corrigan with admiration and then grabbed him by the hand so hard, it was only by gritting his teeth that Corrigan suppressed a howl.

"That's the eye, old hoss!" exclaimed Bracklin. "Glad to see you've woke up. I've been trying to explain to you that I come on East chiefly to see some baseball, and all you've done was to chase me round to tailor shops puttin' me next to style."

"We're pretty much ashamed of it, us real sports," said Corrigan sadly, "and we don't talk much about it for reasons you can understand. Of course I had to tell you and I'm sorry you came all the way from Klondike only to find out that you can't see real good baseball any more. Of course you understand now that we fellers, the good old sports who love clean fast baseball, can't lift a hand on account of the trusts."

Corrigan watched Bracklin narrowly.

(The line was stretching out.)

"What'd that league cost?" The words were the thundering command of the master of millions.

Corrigan was a student of human nature. He got his living that way. He looked at Bracklin with a sort of "you-couldn't-do-it-old-chap" smile as he said, "Oh, that's out of the question, Jim."

"Look here, Chet, you little runt, do you think I hiked down here from the Klondike with only eleven dollars in my jeans?"

"Oh, I know you're pretty well fixed, Jim, but this costs money, real money."

"Just what might you call real money?"

"Well," said Corrigan, sitting down, taking an envelope from his pocket and beginning to figure on it, "men like Radbourne and Kelly, and Galvin, would have to get twenty thousand a year. Of course we'd take in enough before the season is half over to pay the whole year's expenses, but we've got to give 'em all a guarantee and some advance. Let me see—" Corrigan proceeded to make figures on the back of the envelope. Finally he looked up.

"It's no use, Jim, it's all out of the question. Counting first expenses, advance money to players, leasing ball parks, etc., it would take a couple of hundred thousand to put it across." Corrigan leaned back in his chair and sighed dismally.

"It's a grub stake. Are you sure you could get them old ball players?"

"You don't mean to say you've got it in small change, Jim?"

"Say, out our way, two hundred thou' don't talk big. I thought this town had real money. How long would it take you to organize that there league?"

"Two weeks," snapped Corrigan.

(The fish was pulling hard.)

"Get right after it, Chet, get right after it. I've got ten times that money on deposit and an even hundred thousand in paper money downstairs for spendin' money."

Corrigan wet his lips with the tip of his tongue and managed to say, "Jim, it'll take all of my time, but I'll do it for you, believe me I will, because I'm anxious to see the boys back, and I want you to see a real game."

A crack on the back nearly upset him.

"Go to it, old mug. Why, it's been more than fifteen years since I saw one of 'em on the diamond. Won't you take me out and give me a knockdown to 'em?"

"Surest thing you know, Jim. I'll go out now to see if I can round some of them up and we'll have a little dinner tonight, and talk it over."

Corrigan showed no trace of nervousness as Bracklin accompanied him down the elevator, but in the foyer he said, "I'll come and get you tonight about seven, Jim. We'll have the dinner early because even if these old-timers are not allowed to play in the leagues, they always keep fit, and you can't get them to stay up all night. Believe me, they'll be a happy bunch when I tell them there's a chance for them to get into a brand-new league and one that's run by a good old sport."

Corrigan hastened out. There was

much to be accomplished before seven. Bracklin sauntered over to the telephone desk.

"Say Sis, you know all the good shows in town. Tell me what's a real lively one where I can kill time this afternoon."

The big-eyed blonde telephone operator looked at Bracklin in amazement.

"Good *night*, Mr. Bracklin! You wouldn't go into a hot stuffy theatre this beautiful day, would you?"

"When I go to a ball game I want to see real baseball, where they give you something to look at and don't stack the cards. I don't cotton to none of these crooked games where they don't make a home run in a week."

"Why, Mr. Bracklin, who's been kidding you? Baseball's on the level."

"That's all right, Sis; now tell me about a show."

"My name isn't Sis!" The big-eyed blonde looked Bracklin square in the eye.

"Well, give me your handle, Goldie, and I'll use it."

"I might say it was 'Ruby Pearl' or 'Hortense Harcourt,' Mr. Bracklin, but believe me, I'm not a bit ashamed of my name even if it ain't got no tassels on it. I am plain Sarah Hicks," and Miss Hicks defiantly patted a golden curl down over her left eye and smiled complacently at Lucky Bracklin.

"Wrong, Sis,—I mean Sadie, you're far from plain. You're the farthest from plain of any lady I've ever seen in my travels and I've come some distance. Well, what's your advice about a show?"

"If I was you, Mr. Bracklin, I'd go to see 'Her Husband's Wife' up at the Baronet, that is, if you really want to see a genuine show."

"Thanks, Sadie——"

"Miss Hicks."

"Just as you say. Call you Miss Hicks if you want me to, Sadie," and as Bracklin laid down his customary gold eagle, he actually blushed at his own bravery.

At half past seven that night, Corrigan ushered Bracklin into a private dining room at the Elbamoon. They were not in evening clothes. "You know, Jim," explained Corrigan, "these old-timers are plain boys and don't care much for floss, so of course we won't embarass them by dollying up in our 'soup and fish.'"

"Just so, Chet; I know them fellers. I seen them play twenty years ago and they warn't a dude among 'em."

Five men were sitting back from a large round table. Corrigan proceeded to do the honors. First he put his hand on Sandy Peterson's shoulder. Sandy ducked involuntarily. Heretofore, when an arm had reached out for him like that, it had been encased in police-department blue.

"Boys," said Corrigan, "this is Mr. James J. Bracklin, an old-time sport who has been up at the Klondike ten years or so, and he never knew what a dirty trick the baseball trust had put over on you. He's a sport all the way through and he knows baseball from the ground up, although he hasn't seen the game for fifteen years at least. Why, he was telling me today he remembers seeing most of you fellers on the diamond. Of course you boys have changed some

in fifteen years, and the chances are, Mr. Bracklin may not recognise all of you. Besides, a player looks entirely different when he gets his street clothes on. This," and Corrigan again put his hand on Sandy Peterson's shoulder, "this is old Charlie Radbourne!"

"Mighty glad to meet you!" exclaimed Bracklin, and he said it as though he meant it. Peterson winced under Bracklin's hearty handshake.

Then the other introductions were made. Tony Corrigo, otherwise known as "Tony the Tapper," owing to certain fake pool-room episodes, was duly presented as Jim Galvin. Little Joe Wise, whose portrait in the Rogue's Gallery bore the inscription "Alias Badger Joe," this time alias "Charlie Bennett," shook hands with Bracklin, who was duly impressed. It was Pat Dowd's turn next. Pat was red of face and black of record. His profession was that of operating various clubs until the police came in and carted away the wheels, cards, and other fixtures.

"This," said Corrigan with great pride, "is old 'King Kelly.'"

"Old 'slide-Kelly-slide'?" asked Bracklin.

"You're on, bo. I'd like an iron man for every rod I slid between bases. I——"

Corrigan hastily nudged Pat. It wasn't safe for him to talk too long, and he had already made one break, saying "bases" instead of "bags," although Bracklin would not have noticed that in a thousand years.

Then they started to gather about the big table, when one of the men brushed past Corrigan and gave him a nudge. Amidst the scraping of chairs, Corrigan leaned over to his man, Mike Feeney by name, and whispered, "who th' hell did I say you was, Mike?" and Mike whispered back, "some guy named Casey."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Corrigan jovially, "I almost forgot Casey, here. Jim, this is the celebrated Casey."

Bracklin shook hands but looked a bit puzzled.

"You ain't forgot Casey, have you, Jim?" asked Corrigan.

"Why-er-no, I——"

'Sure, Jim, you remember Casey. He's the chap that got so famous they wrote poetry about him. Don't you remember?"

'Ten thousand eyes looked on as he rubbed his hands in dirt;
Ten thousand hands applauded as he wiped 'em on his shirt.'

"You must remember that, Jim; it was called 'Casey at the Bat'; and it ended up with something about 'somewhere the sun is shining,' because mighty Casey had struck out."

"Sure, sure!" exclaimed Bracklin. "I heard a actor named Hopperwolf, or something like that, recite that poem but I never expected to meet Casey himself," and Bracklin again shook hands warmly with Mr. Michael Feeney.

During the dinner, Corrigan's eye travelled rapidly from man to man, in his choice little party of celebrated "old-time ball players." He did most of the talking himself. The details of forming a fourth league were gone over with much enthusiasm. At first Bracklin favored calling it the "Hambone League," and he explained that he struck his multi-million dollar mine because he happened to see a dog dig-

ging up an old buried ham bone, and this dog was pawing out solid gold nuggets at the rate of forty or more a minute. Corrigan diplomatically suggested calling it the "Continental League." He told Bracklin that few people would understand the association surrounding the title "Hambone," and would be inclined to make fun of it.

At the close of the dinner, it was decided to get busy organizing the Continental Baseball League bright and early the next morning.

"Well, Jim, we've got it started," announced Corrigan next day. "I've got a line on some of the best ball parks in the country. I've got to put down some cash for an option, do a lot of telegraphing, and advance some money on contracts with the players. I should think about ten thousand would give us a good start on it."

"Just so, Chet; I'll go down to the office and get it, but hold on——"

Corrigan did hold on—to his breath.

"I've known you for years, Chet, and I'm satisfied, but I'm too much of a Yank to buy a pig in a poke. I come over here to see some baseball and I want to see it. Now you get up a little game between these old boys and just let in three or four hundred of the real sports, and I'll be as contented as a squaw with a brass bracelet."

"What's that?" asked Corrigan, alarmed.

"Why, it's just like this, Chet; I'm crazy to see them good old boys play a real game of ball. You get up that game so I can see it. That'll make me happy and at the same time it'll be deliverin' the goods. You'll get the ten thousand cash in hand on the spot and as much more as you want."

Twice Corrigan swallowed hard before he could speak. As he did this, he was trying to conjure up mental pictures of "Tony the Tapper," "Pat Dowd," "Sandy Peterson," and others of that crowd, trying to put up a real game of ball. He could see that it was no time to parley with Lucky Jim.

"That's business, Jim. I don't blame you a bit. Now, if I can get the boys to come out and give us an exhibition, I'll do it."

"I thought you said they always kept in trim."

"Sure they do," hastily assented Corrigan. "I'll fix up that game for you right away." Then Corrigan left the Greater Grand and went out to arrange the exhibition game. In his day Corrigan had "arranged" many things; but to get a bunch of dissipated, muscle-bound and flabby crooks to put up a swift game of baseball, appeared to Corrigan as just about the limit. But this was no time to stop at anything, with ten thousand easy money and more in sight.

About noon, four days later, Bracklin stepped out of a telephone booth at the Greater Grand wearing a broad grin. He had just called up Corrigan and learned that everything was arranged for a game that afternoon at two. As he approached the desk, he fished out a handful of silver from his pocket, carefully picked out a dime, thrust his fingers in his vest pocket where he kept his golden eagles, and produced one of them. Placing the dime on top of the eagle, he laid them gently on Miss Hicks's

desk. All the time, that estimable young lady, big-eyed and blonde, was regarding him with a most peculiar expression. She had heard his conversation with Corrigan. It was not the first she had heard.

"Sis, or Miss Hicks, accordin' to how mild an' amiable you're a-feeling to me today, seein' as how you say you like level baseball, I wish you'd come along with me this afternoon and see a real, bang-up, genuine game, without no crooked business and without no trusts."

"Do you really mean—that is, do you really believe there's going to be a game, Mr. Bracklin?"

"Sure, I mean it. A real game; ol' 'King Kelly,' and Radbourne, and all them old-timers are goin' to play for my special benefit. It's a secret, Sis, and I'm goin' to ask you to say nothin' 'bout it till I get ready to spring it; but what do you say? Will you jump into the benzine buggy with me and run up and see it?"

"You don't mean, oh, well, never mind; honest, I'm sorry, Mr. Bracklin, but I couldn't get away."

"You ain't half as sorry as I am, Sis," said Bracklin, looking at her admiringly.

Five minutes later, a young man called for Bracklin. He explained that Corrigan had sent him to show him the way to the ball park, as Corrigan himself was too busy up at the park.

While Bracklin and his escort were heading north along Broadway in the touring car Bracklin had engaged for an indefinite period, Chet Corrigan was literally running around in circles in a small private ball park up in Westchester. Already his choice aggregation of "fans" were beginning to arrive. They had been engaged by some of Chet's lieutenants at a promise of two dollars per head. He had hired over two hundred of them —probably the choicest array of loafers and petty crooks ever assembled in any three-acre lot.

In the dressing room, Corrigan was talking with twenty men—the celebrated "old-time baseball stars."

"Look here, Chet," warned Sandy Peterson, "if you ring in a real ball on us, it'll bust my hands wide open and then I'll queer the whole plant."

"That's all right, Sandy, see—" and Chet produced several balls from his pocket—"here's the ringers, Sandy, feel 'em. Soft rubber, covered with leather to make them sound like the real thing. Now don't you forget," and Corrigan wheeled and pointed direct at Patsy Dowd, "you are Kelly, old 'King Kelly,' and you've got to slide. You've got to slide every time you get a chance, or else Bracklin won't think he's getting his money's worth."

"How about the coin right now?" asked Badger Joe, who was to star on the cast as "Charlie Bennett."

"Now don't get nervous, you guys; I'm riggin' this and it's going just like clockwork. When Bracklin comes, he'll bring the money—real money. You get your little hundred down, cash, and when we pull the big pot out of him—the hundred thousand—you get another four hundred apiece."

"But suppose he gets wise?" questioned Mr. Michael Feeney, soon to enact the role of the far-famed "Casey as the Bat."

"Wise, nothing. I'm planting this; I know Bracklin from A to Z, and I tell you that if you play this game right today, it'll be like grabbing a rake-off from a speak-easy—a regular pipe."

By the time Bracklin arrived, the two hundred imitation fans were nearly all in their places in the little grand-stand. Corrigan, approaching to greet him, dropped his white handkerchief. Three hundred and sixty eyes were gazing at Corrigan—twenty of the hired spectators had lost an eye in various questionable encounters—and when they saw Corrigan's handkerchief drop, they arose as one man and gave Bracklin three hearty cheers.

"They recognize a sport all right, Jim," whispered Corrigan, as he led Bracklin into the private box at the grand-stand. Bracklin was duly impressed and as happy as a boy.

The "old-timers" marched out to the benches. They, too, were greeted with a hearty cheer. Dowd, Feeney, Peterson, and some of the others, Bracklin had met at Corrigan's famous league-forming dinner, saluted Bracklin who in turn, shouted, "Hello, Radbourne! Hi there, Kelly," and "Good boy, Casey." Some of the "fans" laughed a little at this, but Corrigan swept a stern glance amongst them and they subsided.

The game started. Time and time again, the soft ball was swatted away out in the left and the batter scored a home-run, whereupon Bracklin waved his hat, yelled enthusiastically and declared, "*that's* like old times. That's what I come all the way from Klondike to see!"

Patsy Dowd slid bases until his borrowed uniform was in shreds and the cuticle of his wrists and chin in scarcely better condition. They were long innings and at four o'clock they were just beginning the eighth. The hired fans were getting uneasy. The fake team of barroom loafers were nearly fagged out. The score stood "Klondikes 21—New Yorks 19." As a tribute to Bracklin, one of the teams had been named the "Klondikes." The idea of keeping the Klondikes a few runs ahead, was a bit of Corrigan's diplomacy.

Between the seventh and eighth innings, things were getting hot for Corrigan. A few obstreperous fans wanted to see the color of Corrigan's money, and besides, they were getting thirsty.

"These good old boys are the most trusting chaps you ever knew," Corrigan told Bracklin, hiding his desperation. "Why, do you know, Jim, a bunch of them good old fellows came up here without even their carfare back. That shows what they think of the game. Doesn't it do you good to see real baseball with all the thrills?"

"It sure does, Chet; it's great baseball." When we get our Continental League goin', we'll show 'em what baseball is from New York to Seattle, acrost and back, and up and down." As Bracklin spoke, his hand went to his inside coat pocket. An expression of blank concern crossed his face.

"Thunderation, Chet! what a lummox I am! Here I've gone and forgot to bring up that money!"

Corrigan went white.

"Good God, Jim!"

The gambler was thinking of his own skin now, but he added craftily,

"I wouldn't disappoint the boys for a million dollars."

"Get that motor, Chet; there's two more innings to play and I'll scoot down to th' Greater Grand and get th' cash. Hold them off on the last inning. I must see it."

Corrigan appeared, following Bracklin to the gate, explaining in a whispered aside to one of his men, but they followed him out to the car.

At the hotel Bracklin proceeded to get his money. As he jammed the roll in his pocket, the big-eyed blonde at the telephone booth coughed.

"Howdy, Sis," big Bracklin smiled, "sorry you didn't see the game."

Sarah sniffed.

"Thought you liked baseball."

"I do, Mr. Bracklin, but——"

"But what?"

"Please step in the telephone booth there, Mr. Bracklin—someone wants to talk with you."

"Can't now—in a hurry."

"*Please,* and quick, Mr. Bracklin."

Lucky Bracklin obeyed. There was a look in Miss Hicks's eye that commanded. He lifted the receiver to his ear, as the voice came through. As he listened, his eyes opened wide and he tried to interrupt, but the voice insisted. What came over the wire to Lucky Bracklin sobered him and made him grip the wad of bills that bulged his inside pocket. But after all, it was not the money that disturbed him most. The voice that came through the wire sent an electric shock to regions untouched.

"Sis," he broke in finally, "are you married?"

"I'm talking about certain crooks who are trying to get your wad, and not about matrimony," came the voice, with some asperity.

"I'm talking about matrimony, and I don't care a royal hoot in Honolulu about Corrigan and his gang. Will you answer my question, Sis? Will you jump into my car, go down and get a license with me and start back to Saskulask in the Dap-huh-nee before——"

The telephone clicked, and when big Jim came out of the booth, Miss Sarah Hicks was gone. The hem of her skirt was just visible as the outer door at the Greater Grand closed. Bracklin saw and made one leap.

As the Daphne sped over the switches at the tail-end of a westbound train, Lucky Bracklin handed her that was Miss Sarah Hicks, a folded slip of paper.

"Keep it for me, Sis. If I ever get soft again, I can read it over and it will cheer me up. It's a note I sent Corrigan."

Sarah read the note and Lucky Jim's laugh could be heard above the noise of the Daphne's wheels.

"Dear Chet," it read, "I'm so disappointed in that new league of ours that I'm going to give it up for two reasons: First, the boys only made a combined score of forty, and when I used to play ball we made from sixty to eighty scores a side. My second and best reason is that I formed a league myself. It may not startle the world, but it suits me, and if anybody asks you about it, tell 'em it's 'Bracklin and Bracklin, nee Hicks, of the Domestic League.' Next time you're looking for easy money, try a New Yorker.

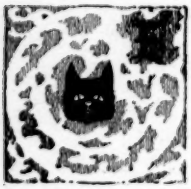
Yours truly,

J. J. Bracklin."

# Double Six

BY L. F. BOFFEY AND TED O'NEIL

*Have you ever thought of the unrecorded tragedies that happen behind the grim walls of a prison? Here is a gripping tale of prison life that will make you "sit-up."*



EIGHT years' confinement within walls of stone had driven the color from Jimson's face and yellowed his skin until it resembled oiled fabric rather than living tissue. And, with fabric-like resistance, the skin held all emotion in check, so that pain and fear, and hope and happiness, were never apparent in Jimson's ferrety countenance. His eyes, too, were normally dull and lifeless, as if separated by inner screens from his vividly imaginative brain—but now the screens had lifted slightly, and pale blue gleams of delight shone through the splits parting his eyelids. For, with freedom only a week distant, Jimson was happier than ever before in his thirty years of existence.

He trudged to a workbench at the end of the shop aisle, dumped a bundle of broom corn from his shoulder to the floor, and shifted position slightly, so that he could watch the keeper from the corners of his eyes. His pantomimic skill in general, but particularly his manner of jerking his forefinger at the bundle on the floor, would have beguiled any neutral observer into believing that the broom corn was the subject of his discourse. But Jimson was dissembling, for the convict at the bench was his special crony.

"How goes it today, pal?" he gurgled tonelessly.

"Always the same, today or tomorrow," came the listless reply. "I can't stand this grind much longer, Jimmy—not for five years, at any rate. This morning I was tempted again to do the high dive over the gallery, and I'll have to give way to it before long."

From sheer force of habit, Jimson stifled the sigh upon his lips, but he thrilled with sympathy for his unfortunate comrade. The black demon of despair, which periodically grips at the hearts of all immured in steel and stone, was no stranger to Jimson—and there were comparatively few shattered ideals in Jimson's own retrospection. He strove to cloak his concern with gruff words of warning:

"Cut out them thoughts, pal. First thing you know you'll be thinking seriously of the Dutch act, an' once over the gallery, there's no coming back alive."

"Better so, Jimmy. There's a long list gone before, and the list will continue to grow after my name—or my number, rather—is added. What have I to live for?—to be overworked, underfed and kennelled for another five years of horrible monotony? No, by God!"

Into Jimson's furtive eyes came dread—intense dread for the welfare of the man beside him. His finger vibrated sharply as if to emphasize a final instruction concerning the broom corn, then he bent and snapped apart the strings confining the bundle. From his almost motionless lips came a hissing caution, couched in prison vernacular:

"Careful, pal! The screw is neckin' this way!"

He wadded the string into a ball, stowed it in his jumper pocket and slouched away from the bench, apparently unconscious of surveillance. But he halted abreast of the raised platform at the end of the shop, not daring to ignore the keeper's crooked forefinger.

"You're leaving pretty soon; eh, Jimson?" queried the keeper, his tone faintly ironic.

"Yes, sir—in a week." Jimson's face was blindly apathetic, but there was a covert sneer in his voice. And the keeper, sensing it, flushed angrily red; whereat Jimson rejoiced. It pleased him to give offense now that he was practically immune from punishment.

"All right—but keep your mouth shut in the shop while you're here," the keeper snapped, then turned to the runner beside his platform. "Fetch Carlin over here," he ordered.

Jimson knew what was coming and for a moment he faced a red mist, while his heart clanged, steam-hammer fashion, against his ribs. Then he stepped forward cringingly, pleadingly, his face strained with fear and horror.

"Carlin wasn't talkin', sir; he only listened to what I had to say about the corn," he babbled. "You ain't goin' to punish him, Mr. Blair? I'm floor man, an' I had to tell him to be careful 'cause the corn's comin' mighty rotten—"

"You get about your work—quick!" It was a positive command and Jimson, not daring to disobey, slunk away; but photographed in his mind was a vision of Carlin's white, fear-stricken face; and, without looking back, he knew that the keeper was glowering evilly upon the culprit, now sullenly motionless before him.

"I spotted you, all right, Carlin," rasped the keeper, "and you can hand this report to the deputy." He scribbled upon a blank as he spoke. "I'm going to teach you and the rest of these blanked 'cons' that rules must be obeyed in this shop."

He might well have stopped there—but he didn't. Instead, he leaned forward, his face malignant with passion, his mouth twisted into a snarl that was bitter, pitiless, baleful, and with rare fluency and precision he cursed the luckless convict. Carlin, his chest heaving and his long, slender fingers clinching and relaxing in harmony with his murderous thoughts, stood, listened—and was silent. But when the flood of invective ceased and a snap of the keeper's fingers signified dismissal, Carlin gazed for a lingering moment into his reviler's eyes, his own eyes gleaming with enmity and lust for revenge. Then he turned and strode doggedly behind the runner to his punishment.

Jimson, cowering in the corner which was his post of duty, passed from sorrowful retrospection to vis-

ioning impossible retaliation. He pictured his puny fists battering the keeper's face until the swarthy flesh was pulplike and sodden with blood; he thrilled with savage delight at the conception of the keeper croaking for mercy—and he groaned because his imagination would carry him no further.

A racking, gurgly cough from the adjoining bench where his helper sat, hampered Jimson's train of thought and irritated him. He faced around angrily.

"For God's sake, choke that noise, Clark!" he muttered, low-toned. "It's drivin' me loony!"

But stopping the cough was for the moment impossible and Jimson, watching the heaving shoulders and distorted face of the man beside him, felt his vexation slowly dissolve into pity. When the paroxysm was over, the man withdrew a crumpled rag from his mouth, and Jimson saw that it was splotched with crimson. He shifted to the end of the bench so that he could reach over and pat the other's shoulder.

"Don't mind me, old man," he contritely begged. "They've just taken my pal to the hole an' thinkin' about it upset me, 'cause it's mostly my fault. Cough's some better, ain't it?"

"Better!" Clark was about Jimson's age, but his face was old—old with the marks of approaching dissolution, and bitterness intensified the semblance of age. "'Mebbe the doctor thought so when he dosed me up this morning. Three months, he said—if I'm lucky."

He coughed again and Jimson turned his head until the rattling sound ceased. It was bad to hear, that cough—but it was worse to watch the accompanying physical contortions.

"Three months," Clark droned on,—"and I was a well man when I come here. They made a lunger of me and they'll keep me here until the job is finished. Three months ain't a hell of a long time, at that."

"Whyn't you try for a pardon?" suggested Jimson, trying to make his voice sound hopeful. "In your condition—"

"No use, Jimmy; no use at all. I ain't got money or friends or nothin'—but I have got a shaver of a kid in an asylum down south, who I'd like to see before I pass out. I reckon I'd give one of them three months—" his voice was terribly wistful—"to see the kid again, Jimmy. But there ain't no chance."

Once more he stopped to cough.

"I had my chance last year in the grindin' shop," he ruminated. "You remember Hogan, Jimmy?—I was standin' next to him when he broke loose an' went for the guard. I could have tackled him easy, and won a pardon; but I was scared stiff and all I drew was a stretch in the hole. It was my chance, all right, and I passed it up. I wish I had it again."

Then the idea was born in Jimson's brain—a wild, daring idea that struggled for construction and refused to be discarded as wholly absurd. Jimson, fashioning the details against his better judgment, saw the weak points and strengthened them; rehearsed the action over and over in his intellect until he was persuaded that it could be carried out. Clark's cough ceased to produce irritation and Clark's voice

dwindled to a mere hum in Jimson's consciousness. It was at least ten minutes later that he spoke:

"That chance, now: if it was a gamble between you an' another chap for life or death—would you take a shot at it?"

"I'm goin' to die in three months anyway, ain't I?" rejoined Clark testily. "Of course I'd take a chance. But what's the use of supposin'?"

"Lot's o' use," said Jimson, and then: "The screw's watchin' us an' I gotter be careful. But I'll spring the scheme on you as soon's I git the chance. Only, if you blab——!"

Jimson's voice could bite like a tempered drill upon occasion.

Back from the punishment cell staggered Carlin,—a physically changed and spirit-broken man. His face, horribly white, was creased with agony lines; his wrists were raw and blood-clotted where manacles had been forced into the flesh by the weight of his suspended body; his blinking lids and watery, almost transparent eyes, were underlined by crescents of deep purple. Keeper Blair grinned at the apparition—grinned with positive malevolence.

"Come to work again, eh?" he leered. "Well, skip along to your bench and see if you've learned enough to keep to the rules for a day or two."

"It was the system speaking through the keeper—the system that, having caught a convict transgressing and doled out the customary measure of punishment, was now satisfied because the convict was again at work making corn into brooms. Blair, with smug complacency, turned to his desk and opened the ledger wherein he entered daily reports for the cognizance of higher officials. Small chance, in his opinion, of any rules being broke that morning,—for Carlin's presence was an object lesson.

Had he felt otherwise, he might have noticed Jimson stealing circumspectly down the aisle towards Carlin's bench—Jimson, with a bundle of broom corn in his arms and a glib lie on the end of his tongue, for use if his manœuver were noticed, and he were halted for explanation. But the angel—or devil—of prisons guarded Jimson; and when the keeper finally glanced up from an obstinate phrase of entry, Jimson was ensconced behind the concealing frame of Carlin's bench.

Carlin's jumper hung from a corner of the bench; and into one of the pockets Jimson transferred a greasy package he had carried inside his shirt next to his skin.

"I swiped a lump from breakfast, pal—keep on workin', for cripe's sake—an' I guess it'll feel good to yer belly," he whispered hoarsely. "Slammed it into you hard, huh?"

"Mighty hard!" gritted Carlin, the words jerking through his still lips in the pauses of his hammer's rat-tat. "But it's the last chance they'll get at me. I'm going over the gallery tonight."

"No, y'ain't!" There was eagerness in Jimson's localized whisper, and a trace of anxiety, besides.

"Ye're goin' to tackle a scheme what's got a pardon danglin' at the end of it—if ye're game enough to

chance croakin' by a different route than the gallery."

"If you'll say that over in English, I might catch the drift of it," Carlin slurred incredulously.

Jimson said it over in plain, unmistakable language. It took fully five minutes for the recital—five long, tingling minutes, during which Carlin played feverishly with his tools and material. Twice he seemed to feel the keeper's eyes boring into the small of his back; but each time a furtive sidelong glance reassured him. But there was the awful possibility that a machine might go wrong, or a convict's supply of corn might peter out; and then Jimson would be needed—and exposed. So Carlin was relieved when the sibilant monologue came to an end and Jimson, first peering out to see if the keeper was busy, rose stealthily to his feet and quickly grabbed up the bundle of corn he had laid beside the bench. For one brief moment the eyes of the two men met; Jimson's flashing an inquiry more positive than articulation; Carlin's bewildered, hopeful, yet despairingly hopeless.

Then Carlin nodded, almost imperceptibly, though inwardly railing at himself for a driveling idiot. The scheme was so wild, so fantastic, that it seemed sheer craziness to consider its success a possibility. Only an unwritten penitentiary law favored it, and another unwritten law forecasted death for one, at least, of the participants. Yet, in Carlin's state of mind, death in any form was infinitely preferable to further incarcerations in the underground punishment cell.

His eyes, darting sideways, followed Jimson to the keeper's stand; saw the keeper look up from his book, nod briefly, and return to his work; saw Jimson—awesome of face—shuffling down the aisle towards him. And Jimson's voice, though of normal pitch, sounded harsh, strained, to Carlin's ears.

"The shop needs handles, Carlin, an' Mr. Blair says you should help me load 'em." To the few convicts within hearing scope, the words implied that the keeper, and not Jimson, had made the selection of his helper.

Carlin wheeled around and raised his hand—prison code for permission to leave his bench. Blair glanced towards him, jerked his head upward in mechanical assent—and Carlin trudged shakily down the aisle in Jimson's wake. At the end of the shop they stopped to haul out an iron truck; then, each grasping an end of the handle crossbar, they proceeded to the storeroom. Midway, Clark joined them and almost immediately dropped back to the rear of the truck, neither looking at them nor speaking, but coughing—coughing hackingly and incessantly.

Into the storeroom they clattered—the trio and the truck; and Jimson swung behind to close the door. The breath came from his lips—blue, quivering lips—in jerky gasps, and his eyeballs protruded froglike from lidless sockets. He fumbled in his pocket, and brought out two wooden dice, and extended them to Clark.

"'Tain't no use talkin'—you both know what to do," he said, and words crackled from his dry throat. "You first, Clark—hurry an' get it over with!"

Clark's talon-shaped fingers clutched the cubes, folded them, his lower knuckles standing out prominently, vividly white, from the intensity of his grip. He asked a brief question and his voice seemed to come from a great depth in his body.

"One flop?"

"One flop—high wins," croaked Jimson.

Then Clark, with a sudden motion of his wrists, ejected the dice from his palm. One dice stopped leadenly as it touched the floor, almost as if a magnetic impulse had stilled its progress; the other dice rotated sharply, its tiny clatter against the wooden boards sounding ominously distinct to the ears of the watchers. There were six black spots on the upper surface of the motionless die; and when the other settled down within an inch of its twin, there were four black spots showing.

"Ten!" exulted Clark, a world of relief in his cackling, hysterical voice. "I guess I win—I win!"

Jimson retrieved the cubes. While the dice were spinning, the yellowness of his face had merged into ashy gray, but now the bilious hue was returning. Suddenly he jumped to the door, leaned over, applied his ear to the rough boards. Carlin, apparently more composed than the others, turned to a stack of broom handles formed tier upon tier, dragged down a dozen or more and tossed them upon the truck, all the while growling an insistent summons through locked teeth for Clark to join him.

"It's all right," gurgled Jimson, upright again. "Thought I heard the screw comin'." His eyes roved pityingly over Carlin's face, the clenched fingers of his extended hand concealing the dice in his palm. "Your turn, pal—an' God be with you!"

There was no hesitation in Carlin's attitude—and no hope. He took the dice, shook them for a second or two in his closed palm, then opened his fingers and rolled the wooden blocks upon the floor. His eyes were dull, lifeless, resigned; and though he crouched tensely over the spinning cubes, he had no expectation of beating Clark's throw. All the elements of chance were against him—and chance had never favored Carlin from the day that he signed another man's name to a check.

The dice stopped rolling. Carlin's eyes blazed wonderingly, dulled again in disbelief of what they saw, then reflected, in one consistent gleam, joy, exultation, glory. Clark staggered back against the broom-handle pile, and a low, horrible whine cadenced through his colorless lips. Jimson leaned over and snatched up the dice, glancing at Clark furtively, apprehensively; but Clark was deep in the dregs of despair—despair intensified by the choked cry from Carlin:

"Double six, by God!"

Echo-like, came Clark's wail:

"Double six! And I lose—I lose!"

He rubbed his eyes with his knuckles; rubbed as if he wanted to erase the vision of the death-dealing cubes from his mind and, perhaps, to hide from the other men the deadly fear that lurked under his eyelids. Jimson and Carlin watched him dubiously, but he gave them no chance to express the doubt that assailed them, for he straightened suddenly and his

demeanor was at once friendly, gentle, martyrlike.

"Unlock the door, Jimmy, and let's load these handles before the screw gets suspicious." He turned to the wooden pile, but added over his shoulder as an afterthought, "It's all right, boys, I'll go through my end of the bargain. I'm nearly dead now."

For the third time during the afternoon, the keeper found occasion to chide Clark because of some minor infraction, and his final warning was harsh and snappy. Clark swung around to face the reprimand, his eyes sneery, contemptuous; his colorless lips shrivelled up from yellow, fanged teeth, through the interstices of which dribbled crimson-tinged saliva. In his attitude was the hatred and disdain he dared not express in words.

"One more break and you go to the deputy," was the keeper's ultimatum. "Those bum lungs of yours don't allow you to smash all the rules to pieces. Get back to your bench."

Clark shambled to his station, squatted down on the bench, and fully conscious that the keeper was watching him, fished a chunk of bread from his pocket and started to munch it. He was playing a game—a game that promised him nothing better than hastened dissolution; and he was playing it with elaborate cleverness and nerve. He giggled foolishly in the face of the runner sent to fetch him to the stand; then he threw the crust away and passively marched at the runner's heels.

"You're bound to go to the deputy, then," rasped the keeper, as Clark stood at the platform with out-thrust tongue licking crumbs from the corners of his mouth. "I guess you know what eating in the shop will get you—and I'll bet a hat you swiped that bread from the dining room. Why didn't you keep it and carry it along with you to the hole?"

"You ain't going to send me to the hole?" quavered Clark incredulously. "I couldn't stand more'n two or three hours down there and you know it."

"No—I guess you couldn't." Suave brutality hung in the keeper's voice; he spoke without looking up from the report he was writing. "But you'll have a chance to try it, all right."

Then, having completed the report, he looked up—looked up just in time to swerve aside from the savage onslaught which landed Clark beside him on the platform. There was madness in the convict's eyes; something of the wild fury and power which characterizes beasts at bay, in his frenzied, vicious attack; marvelous energy, seemingly gathered from the air, in the corporeality that a moment before was starved and racked with disease. Clark whirled a broommaker's hammer above his head and screeched crazily as he advanced; the keeper answered with a frantic wail for help just before the hammer crashed against his temple and stretched him, bleeding and stomach-sick, upon the floor of his stand.

Clark threw the hammer aside and from his waistband drew a thin-bladed, murderous instrument that once had been a file, but now was ground and sharpened to stiletto edge. He flung himself upon the prone body of the keeper, deadly menace in his flaming, downthrust face, and poised the weapon to strike.

"Send me to the deputy, will you—you skunk?" he shrilled. "Send me to the hole to die! I'll go, blast you! —I'll have to go—but you'll reach hell before I do!"

Sheer horror held the keeper's eyes open; the flesh below his ribs quivered in anticipation of the downward flash that would gouge the life from his trembling body. He groaned, tried to roll over on his stomach, but the straddled weight of the convict forced him back. A prayer gurgled upon his lips—a futile, amateurish prayer, for only a miracle could thwart the death hovering above him.

And then the miracle—

A drab body vaulted to the stand, smashed into Clark, and flung him forcibly from his prostrate victim. It was Carlin—Carlin alone, of the fifty onlookers in convict garb, who had dared rush to the rescue. Clinging, biting, striking; hands alternately tugging at each other's hair and clawing at each other's features, Clark and Carlin tumbled and rolled and fought upon the platform floor. The dazed keeper struggled to his knees, clung to the edge of his desk, and with blood streaming thickly red from the gash in his temple, watched the combatants through glazed, terrified eyes. He screamed once for aid; and in the peculiar silence of the room, broken only by gasping exhalations from the struggling men, his voice was shrill, womanishly fearful.

Thudding footsteps from far down the corridor answered him, foretokening the coming of the rescue guard. But it seemed that they would come too late, for Clark, with a superhuman effort, wrenched his hand free—the hand with the knife—and struck viciously upward. The blade, poorly aimed, ripped the flesh of Carlin's arm from elbow to shoulder, and the blood, spurting out, drenched both men with warm, crimson stickiness. The wound sickened Carlin for the moment and he staggered back—and Clark swung with maniacal fury towards the keeper. Then Carlin leaped upon him again, clawing, straining; and they tumbled together to the floor.

Through the door crashed the rescue guard: five sentries and a keen-eyed officer, all with rifles held ready for action. The sentries lined immediately against the wall, prepared summarily to quell any demonstration from the convicts slouching back against benches and machines; and the officer, taking in the situation with one sweeping, comprehensive glance, rushed to the keeper's stand.

His clubbed rifle swung with vicious force against the two men on the platform floor, and Carlin, uppermost, groped wildly for equilibrium, then slithered to the edge of the stand, yelping like a stricken cur. Clark tried to rise, but the rifle muzzle forced him back and he ceased to resist, dropping the knife and crooking his forearms over his face. Postured thus, he wailed—a terrible, intense cry, that was a swan song of despair.

"Shut up!" snarled the officer. "You're not dead—yet!" He hailed his men across the room: "Over here, one of you, to look after this other chap."

The keeper interposed weakly.

"He's all right, Captain—the one you're holding is your meat!" He applied his hand to his forehead and

shuddered at the sight of the thick blood that spattered on his palm. "I'd be a goner, sure, if this other fellow hadn't jumped to help me. You'd better get us both to the doctor."

"Oh, that's it, eh?" The thin lips of the captain twisted into what he intended to be a kindly, tolerant smile, as he regarded Carlin with changed interest. "I'll take care of you both in a jiffy."

He curtly addressed the sentry answering his call:

"Lug this chap to the deputy's office—shackle him and call Ben to give you a hand. Then come back and shove the rest of the 'cons' into their cells."

After which, he turned to Carlin, and the hand he clapped to the convict's shoulder was smooth and soft.

"Come along, old man; I'll help you to the hospital. Nasty dig, that, on your arm—keep you in bed a couple of weeks, I'll warrant." They were outside, now, in the corridor; Carlin stumbling along with the officer's hand guiding him; the keeper following a few steps to the rear. "You've earned your rest; and I shouldn't be surprised if you had a message from the governor about the time you're on your feet again."

He knew—the thin, eagle-faced captain—that Carlin had fairly won his pardon according to the prime unwritten law of all prisons, for to defend a keeper from death is a convict's surest route to executive clemency.

Jimson, locked in his cell because work in the broom shop was suspended for the day, knew, too, that Carlin was as good as free. There was an agony of doubt in Jimson's mind—doubt caused by the final sight of Clark's strained, death-dreading face, as he marched away to punishment that must surely extinguish the spark of life in his famished body. And Jimson, struggling with a vague instinct that might once have been his conscience, recalled the terror which flashed into Clark's eyes earlier in the day—in the storeroom, when the dice rolled against him. Something tugged at Jimson's heartstrings and made him yearn to cry.

"Poor old boy! You did splendid!" he muttered regretfully. "It looked like a real scrap, with you cuttin' Carlin, an' all. I'd a-been fooled myself, if I wasn't in the know. An' now you're on the way to the morgue; an' you'll never see that kid o' yours like you wanted to." He was silent for a moment, brooding; then he muttered on, passionately, defensively,—"You was near dead, anyhow, an' Carlin's big an' strong. He's me pal an' he'll folly me out in a couple o' weeks, instead o' cro king hisself—but I'll never tell him how I cooked the play against you. He'd kill me, likely."

Jimson's hand strayed to his pocket and played unconsciously with the wooden cubes resting there—four wooden cubes. Suddenly he jerked them out and leaned forward to examine them in the murky light. He separated them, holding a set in each of his hands. Those in his right hand were numbered from one to six, in regulation style; but there were only five-spots and six-spots, each number thrice repeated, on the sandpapered surfaces of each die in his left hand.

# The Paternal Instinct

BY MAURICE BOWMAN PHIPPS

*Practical jokers are dangerous in any family, particularly where young babies and new fathers are concerned. Read what happened to this father.*

HE darkness of late afternoon, the swirling snow, and the eccentric gyrations of a wind-battered umbrella, all combined to prevent Mr. Lemuel Tupper from noticing, until his foot was on the doorstep, anything out of the ordinary in the appearance of his front porch.

And it really was not the appearance of the large market basket reposing serenely before his door which startled him; it was the sounds which emanated from it. There was no mistaking that muffled, plaintive wail. Mr. Tupper's own heir and pride had reached the mature age of four months, and he instantly recognized the insistent cry of a hungry baby.

Mr. Tupper's first and natural instinct was to pick up that basket and enter the house, and if, in the first shock of his discovery, he had not dropped his latch key into the drifted snow, undoubtedly he would have obeyed that impulse. Before he found the key, however, a sudden thought arrested him. What would Mabel say?

Of course, it was absurd to think that Mrs. Tupper could hold him responsible for this unwelcome stranger, but Mr. Tupper, in the two years of his married life, had learned one thing, if nothing else, and that was that it was quite within the uncanny power of his young wife to twist any unpleasant fact, from the non-appearance of the morning milk to the withholding of the ballot from women, into such shape, that it appeared that Lemuel Tupper alone was the person at fault, and that it was Lemuel's duty to right the wrong he had committed.

So Lemuel hesitated, pulled nervously at the thin wisp of side whiskers—"lambrequins," Mrs. Tupper's younger brother termed them,—and gazed frowningly at the unconscious object at his feet. A fluttering envelope tied to the handle caught his attention and he tore it off; then, holding it so that the faint light from the hall window could fall upon it, saw that his name, in an unfamiliar hand, was written upon it. The note within, though brief, was most decidedly to the point.

"Lem dear," it began, and the temperature of "Lem dear," notwithstanding the snow-storm, approached the boiling point. He quivered with indignation.

Mr. Tupper was not a person to be addressed as Lem. His mother had called him Lemuel, only Heaven knows why, and Lemuel he had remained. To his schoolmates he had been Lemuel; he was Lemuel to a

few of his business associates at the bank, his wife addressed him as Lemuel, and only one person in the entire world ever called him anything else; that person was Mrs. Tupper's brother Roger.

Mr. Tupper generally referred to his brother-in-law as "that impudent young cub," Roger having arrived at that state of moral obliquity, social depravity, and general all-around cussedness, known as the sophomore year; but his unpopularity with his sister's husband did not dampen his buoyant spirits. To him Mr. Tupper was Lem, frequently Lemmy, but even Roger halted before "Lem dear" was reached. And this, this person had the temerity—Mr. Tupper's attention returned to the note.

"Lem dear," he read, "don't think too unkindly of me for doing what I am forced to do. You know how difficult it has been for me to take care of baby as he should be taken care of, but hard as it has been I would not now give him up to you only I am leaving town tomorrow, and where I am going, it would be utterly impossible to appear with a child, so I am leaving him with the one person upon whom he has a claim. I am doing this for the best, as you will later realize. I know that you will love him and be kind to him. Perhaps some day you may have a kind thought for me. Good-bye, you will probably never see me again.

W. D."

Mr. Tupper stood motionless. The whirling snow sifted down his neck unheeded. Surprise had given way to indignation; indignation to a cold, numbing terror. A wail louder than before, galvanized him into action. He seized the basket, stumbled blindly down the steps, and fought his way through the storm toward the police station.

The desk sergeant looked up from his evening paper as the door was flung violently open and a storm-tossed individual with mutton-chop whiskers, a receding chin, and a large market basket entered.

"'D evenin', Mr. Tupper," he said. "What's wrong?"

"This," Mr. Tupper exclaimed, as he held out his basket, "this is wrong. It's—it's the most outrageous thing I ever heard of. It's monstrous that a respectable citizen has no protection against this sort of thing!"

"What sort of thing?" the sergeant inquired, eyeing the basket as though he expected nothing less than the explosion of an infernal machine. "What's in the basket?"

"A baby!" Mr. Tupper cried, striking a theatrical pose. "A live baby! Someone left it on my porch. The idea of trying to foist such a thing on me!"

"Not yours, eh?" the sergeant queried good-naturedly.

"Not mine! Not——" words failed Mr. Tupper.

"Sergeant," he said at last, "I consider this to be the most monumental piece of impudence I ever heard of. The woman who left this brat on my doorstep is simply trying to ruin my reputation in this community, insinuating that I am the father of this child!"

"How so?" the policeman inquired. "Lots of kids are abandoned on doorsteps, but that don't make the owner of the doorsteps the father, does it? Warn't there no letter with the young one?"

"Letter," Mr. Tupper faltered, "letter? Eh—no. There was no letter—nothing."

What was the use of telling this

amused police sergeant about the letter. It would, Mr. Tupper decided, only complicate matters. Besides, there are some things about which one may have the firmest convictions, but which might be extremely difficult to prove in court. Mr. Tupper's knowledge of the law regarding foundlings was very hazy.

"What am I to do with this baby?"

"Leave it here," the sergeant replied.

"The matron will look after him—or her, til' the Society is notified. That is, of course, unless you want to adopt her—or him, yourself."

Mr. Tupper carefully deposited his burden on the bench, bowed a dignified good-evening, and, with the firm conviction in his heart that the police of his small city were of an altogether too frivolous a cast of mind, turned his steps toward home.

While Mr. Tupper had been enjoying himself at the police station, the customary tranquillity of the Tupper household had been rudely jolted into a state of the wildest frenzy.

Shortly after her husband's retreat with the market basket, Mrs. Tupper appeared upon the scene. She had been to a meeting of the Mothers' Club, her first visit since she had become eligible for membership, and, consequently, was impatient to return to the crib-side of her offspring.

"Has Baby cried?" she asked of her brother, as she hurried out of her snowy wraps. "I've been gone longer than I thought I would."

"I—I haven't heard him," Roger answered in a manner peculiarly embarrassed. "Possibly he has, but I—eh—no, he hasn't cried."

Roger glanced appealingly at the figure of Mr. Bill Davis, his roommate, chum and fellow guest during the Christmas holidays in the Tupper home, but Mr. Davis was absorbed in his book and did not lift his eyes.

"Say, Bill," Roger pleaded in a hoarse whisper, after his sister had gone up stairs, "you tell her, won't you? You're a guest, and—and, she can't say much to you—"

Bill lowered his book and regarded his roommate with a cold and unimpressed eye.

"I like your nerve," he said finally. "Against my better judgment you insist on carrying out the diabolical joke of leaving a four-months' old infant on the doorsteps in a raging blizzard—"

"Diabolical nothing!" Roger interrupted. "The kid is used to sleeping out in snow-storms; Mabel's one of these fresh air fiends; it was a good deal warmer out on the porch than it was in the nursery."

"And then," Bill continued, ignoring the interruption, "you have the consummate nerve to ask me to spring the pleasant little surprise on your sister. Not much! Not for a large bundle of filthy lucre. Thank you kindly, but I decline. I told you that you were letting yourself in for it. The female of the species is not to be trifled with when her—"

"Aw, shut up!" Roger exclaimed. "How was I to know Lem had a guilty conscience? Why couldn't he have behaved like any other human being would have behaved? The idea of not recognizing his own kid. He's the poorest excuse for a man I ever

saw, anyhow. Mabel must have married him on a bet. He's the—"

Mr. Roger Merwin's pleasant dissertation on his brother-in-law was cut short by the loud and insistent ringing of an electric bell somewhere in the rear of the house. This was followed by the quick patter of footsteps on the stairs, and then excited voices overhead.

Had Mrs. Tupper, when an instant later she burst into the living room, been a bit less intent on reaching the telephone, she would have caught sight of two young men making a flying exit through the portieres which hid the dining room from view.

"Give me the police station, quick, quick!" the trembling practical jokers heard her cry out. "Hurry, oh, hurry, please, there's been a kidnapping—oh, the police station? Send an officer at once! My baby's been kidnapped! At once, do you hear? He's been stolen, I say! Oh, do be quick! Oh, 290 Elm Street—Mrs. Tupper's. My baby's been kidnapped!"

At the word "kidnapped," as though it were the cue for his entrance upon the scene, Lemuel Tupper stepped into the living room from the hall. He was somewhat agitated; in fact, his little side whiskers twitched with suppressed emotion, but his wife noticed nothing.

"Lemuel!" she shrieked, "baby's gone! Stolen! Kidnapped! What shall we do?"

"Gone!" her husband echoed weakly. "Stolen, kidnapped! What do you mean? How can he be gone?"

"He's stolen, I tell you—stolen! He was asleep in the nursery when I went out; when I came back he was gone. Mary knows nothing about him; she hasn't been upstairs, thought he was still asleep. Oh, do something, for God's sake, do something; don't stand there staring like that!"

A great light had burst upon the intelligence of Mr. Tupper. He had carried his own son and heir to the police station! He had found that child on his front doorsteps together with a fiendishly incriminating note. His brother-in-law was a guest! The whole thing was laid bare. Roger Merwin's diabolical sense of humor was at the bottom of this affair; but how could he confess to Mabel that he had failed to recognize his own flesh and blood. That he had scarcely glanced at the infant would be no excuse; never, never would she be able to forgive him. Oh, the infernal scoundrel! the impudent, heartless cub! What vengeance would he not like to wreak upon this miserable brother-in-law of his? At the imminent risk of an apoplectic seizure, he managed to remain silent for a moment.

"Where," he asked, at last, "is that brother of yours?"

"I don't know; he was here a moment ago; but he doesn't know anything about it. I asked him when I came in if—Lemuel, you don't suppose! oh, he couldn't be so cruel!"

"He couldn't, eh? Well, that's just what has happened, and he's made a fool of me into the bargain!"

It was a hysterical Mrs. Tupper that, some moments later, snatched from the protecting arms of the law, her first-born.

"Thank you, sir," said the officer to

Mr. Tupper, as a yellow-backed bill changed hands—"not a word from me, sir, you can rely on it!"

He squeaked heavily to the front door, and turned, helmet in hand, for a parting pleasantry:

"'T'is a wise father, nowadays, that knows his own child; ain't it?"

Mr. Tupper entered the living room and stirred up the fire until there was a cheerful blaze. Then, with a guilty look over his shoulder, he removed from his pocket a note, the first words of which were: "Lem dear."

He tarried so long over the ceremony of burning the last scrap of this loathsome document that he failed to witness the unostentatious departure of his erstwhile guests.

"I wonder," Roger mused, as they slouched into an obscure corner of the railway station, "I wonder if he'll show that note to Mabel. I must ask her sometime."

"You," his friend commanded, "leave well enough alone! You have done quite a sufficiency. Enough is too much!"

# The Last Spark

BY ROY ELLIS

*A man pays for his sin and comes out of prison to find the woman he loved waiting for him. But he had lost more than good years of his life behind the gray walls, and facing the situation, made the supreme sacrifice.*

WITH a muttered word that might have been either thanks or a curse, John Durkin, No. 14297, shuffled out of the warden's office and into the free world.

In his hand he clutched tightly the five dollar bill, which, with the ludicrously ill-fitting new suit and the squeaky new shoes that shouted "jailbird!" at every step, was to be his stake for a new deal in the game of Life.

The morphine, for which Durkin had bartered to the corridor guard the last of his scanty cell ornaments, was beginning to die in him. This made him nervous and shaky; but he was not worried, for the guard had also given him the address of a little drug store, where his five hard-won dollars would purchase a week's supply of the stuff of dreams.

Nirvana for a week! And then—and then he would spin once more that vicious wheel, below which the net of the Law is ever spread to catch the weaklings as they fall.

Two blocks from the prison, Durkin began to hurry. His shuffling gait, product of many a lockstepped line, carried him along at a surprising pace. His lean, haggard face, with its tell-tale pallor, was set straight ahead, his dull eyes introspective. Distrustful of his treacherous memory, he was mumbling over and over the address that the guard had given him—the goal that held for him the only hope life had to offer.

So intent was he that the cab driver had shouted twice before he realized that he was being addressed. Then he whirled with a startled cry, sick with the fear that the cat of State had her paw on him again—that he had only fancied he was free.

"Lady wants to speak to you," said the driver laconically, warping his craft up to the curb. The door swung open and a black-clad woman leaned out. Her face was heavily veiled.

"Gerald," she called softly.

The bowed figure on the sidewalk did not stir.

"Gerald Wade," she called again, and now there was a piteous note of uncertainty in her voice.

The man whom the prison register knew as "Durkin, 14297," shuffled slowly to the curb. His eyes were wide and staring, and his cheeks were blanched by a pallor more ghastly than the prison bleach.

With an eager gesture the woman pushed back the veil that concealed her face—a white, weary face, thin and grief-worn, but now radiant with the joy of faith justified.

The man's dull eyes were alight. "Margaret!" he cried, in a great voice, and made a step forward and raised his arms as if he would take her into them. Then he began to tremble; his arms dropped to his sides and the fire died out of his eyes. He shifted his gaze to the brown earth at his feet.

"I'm just out of prison," he said doggedly.

The woman smiled on him with brooding tenderness. "I know, dear boy, I know," she comforted him. "Sit down here beside me, Gerald."

He obeyed her like a child, and she spoke to the staring driver:

"An east-bound train is due in forty minutes. See that we don't miss it."

Then she turned to the broken man beside her and her eyes were bright with tears.

"Can you forgive me?" she asked softly. "Did you understand that I did my best?"

He stared at her stupidly. "I do not understand," he faltered. "What have I to forgive you?"

"I was your promised wife. Yet through all that weary year in prison —that first time—you had no visit from me; not even a message."

"But I was a convicted thief. I never expected—"

"Oh, but I tried!" she cried passionately. "I knew you did not mean to steal. I know you would have paid them back if they had given you a chance. And I knew, too, that what you did, foolish though it was, was done for me. If I had come to you when you wanted me, without insisting that you measure up to my father's standards of wealth, everything would have been well with us. Gerald, the fault was more mine than yours."

"Hush, Margaret."

There was a subtle change in the man's appearance. The bowed shoulders had straightened. The hang-dog look was gone. It seemed not so unbelievable now, that he should have a name like other men: that he had once walked upright and unafraid; that a woman should have loved him.

"Five times," she swept on, "I contrived to get to the prison office. I begged them to let me see you; but my father had influence with the warden, and they sent me away. Many, many letters I wrote you. I found them unopened in my father's desk when he died. I planned to be at the prison gate to meet you when you were free; so they lied to me, told me that your sentence had been commuted and that you were already gone."

"If I had known! If I had dreamed that you still cared!"

"Cared?" She smiled at him through her tears. "Gerald, life stopped for me when I found that you had gone without a word. I think I was a little mad for a while. They took me abroad and were very gentle with me; but I could not forget. Then my father died and I came back to America, a rich woman and free. I found those poor comforting letters that you never saw, and then I understood. Oh, Gerald. I wanted you so!"

The man did not speak, but his eyes were glowing.

"I employed detectives; appealed to you through the personal columns of the great newspapers; offered rewards for any word of you; but for a long time I could find no trace. Then came a message from a man who had spent a night with you in a cheap lodging house, and there I picked up your trail. I was a happy woman that day. The man I loved was somewhere in the world and I knew that I should find him. Once, a year passed without progress; but I never lost faith. Yesterday I heard that you were here, and I came, scarce daring to hope that the search was ended. Gerald, dear, it has been nine years!"

She was crying quietly; not unhappily, but as one who finds joy too great to bear. The man lifted his scarred and calloused hand and patted her clumsily on the shoulder.

"And now?" he questioned huskily.

She smiled, and a little wave of color swept from throat to brow. "We will be married at once, if you like. We can live abroad, where no one has ever known us. We are rich, dear, and can follow our fancies. You must decide those things. All I can think of now is that I have found you again."

A pulse in the man's brain throbbed. He had a crazy impulse to shout, to sing. The loathsome life of the past nine years seemed like a horrible dream—a too vivid dream—from which he had been providentially awakened.

Through the cab window, he could see the brown, shriveled turf by the roadside, already quickening into life under the reviving touch of spring. It seemed like a prophecy. Again he was Gerald Wade, with a future of ease and happiness before him. John Durkin—the striped, numbered thing—was merely a shuddering memory. He felt a rush of passionate gratitude to the woman whose love had wrought this miracle.

But as his eyes sought her, as his muscles flexed to draw her to him, came a tug at his nerve centres as insistent and arresting as a hand on his shoulder.

The Hab't, cheated for a while by the revival of old dreams, was again asserting itself. The craving would grow stronger, irresistible, until presently he would stoop to any foulness, commit any crime, to obtain the drug for which his tortured nerves cried out.

He had a sudden clear vision of what life with him would mean for the woman at his side. He saw the shattering of dreams, the pitiful clinging to faith, the slow breaking of her heart under the sordid evidence of his unworthiness. And he knew that it was too late for him to change. The evil years that had broken his body had warped his soul beyond any hope of straight, clean living.

Yet there remained a spark of nobility in his shriveled soul.

"Dear lady," he said, and his voice was very calm, though his face worked strangely, "the sight of you was like a glimpse of Paradise to one of the damned, and the memory of your goodness will be with me while I live; but I cannot permit this last sacrifice. The man you loved is dead. You do not know the creature who lives in his body."

She swayed toward him, her arms outstretched, and all the wonder of womanhood in her eyes.

He shrank from her touch, clinging desperately to his resolve.

"Ah, Margaret!" he cried brokenly, "you must know that such a marriage is impossible. I am worthless past telling; not even a high grade criminal; just flotsam on the sea of the underworld!"

She still smiled bravely and her eyes were soft with pity.

The man hesitated. He must go on; yet he had a curious shame in the next confession.

"That is not all," he faltered. "Margaret, I use drugs. I am a hopeless slave to morphine. Look at my eyes! See the dull mask of my face! See how my hands tremble! Even now I am mad for the stuff."

"Poor Gerald!" she sighed. Then she said brightly, "But we will cure that. We will have the best doctors, the happiest surroundings. And after all, it is only a foolish habit. I care for none of these things—only that you love me."

He looked at her hopelessly. He had tried and failed, and the lure of her sweet lips and yearning arms made him faint with longing.

Well, he would try again; he would cut deep, that she might be spared a greater suffering.

"Love you?" he questioned, and his smile was a leer. "I tell you, you don't know men like me. You never did know me—not even in the old days. Oh, I wanted to marry you then, and of course I'm grateful to you now. But tastes change in nine years, my dear girl."

She drew away from him, startled, tremulous. It was a bitter thing to kill the light in her eyes.

"You say I stole for you," he cackled. "That is a very funny joke; but we'll let it pass."

He flashed a glance at her. She crouched weakly on the cab seat, as far away from him as the narrow limits of the vehicle would permit. Her hands were at her throat, her face as white as paper.

"God!" she cried in a piteous voice, "and all these years I have searched for you!"

The cab drew up at the station and the man threw open the door and sprang out. His ghastly face grinned up at her.

"Come on to the preacher, if you like. I suppose I owe you that much." He chuckled horribly. "Come on," he jeered, "don't keep the bridegroom waiting."

She looked on him with loathing unspeakable; and the soul of Gerald Wade was very glad, for he saw that the fight was won.

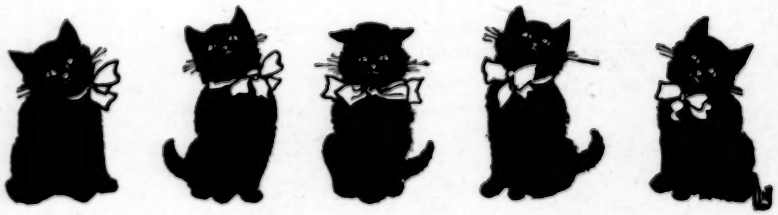
"Oh, go!" she panted, tearing with fluttering hands at the bosom of her dress. "Here is money. Here is the ring you gave me. Take them, and for God's sake go!"

A roll of bills and a jeweled circlet fell in the dust at his feet. Then the cab door closed, and the driver, at a word from within, drove to the other side of the station.

The man stood, a bowed, shrunken figure, staring at the ground. Presently, he stopped and picked up the objects at his feet. The ring he slipped into his pocket, the money he fumbled uncertainly.

"There was once a man named Gerald Wade," he reflected, "who would have starved rather than use this money. Gerald Wade, however, is dead. There is no reason why John Durkin should be so fastidious."

He shuffled away from the station. Soon he was hurrying, his haggard face with its tell-tale pallor set straight ahead, his dull eyes introspective. Over and over he mumbled the address that the prison guard had given him—the goal that held for him the only hope Life had to offer.



# The Strange Case of Double Infancy

BY CHARLES SHERWOOD RICKER

*With the laboratory as a background, you see a startling experiment with cell-life and more startling results.*

IT lacked about eight minutes of midnight when I was aroused by the soft jingle of the ward 'phone. I had evidently been dozing, for before I could get across the hall to answer the first ring, there came a second. I took down the receiver a little disappointed, for I had been up nearly all of the previous night and had hoped to get to bed in fairly good season, but a midnight call nearly always means emergency and consequent hard work.

The voice on the 'phone I readily recognized. It was old Doctor Comstock.

"Is that you, Vedrine?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"I have a case that I must bring in at once and get on the table," he continued. "The man is slowly bleeding to death, and while there isn't much chance of our stopping the hemorrhage, it's worth the try."

"Very well," I answered, "I will have things ready for you," and hung up the receiver.

I sent the hospital ambulance to the address Doctor Comstock had given, and set about preparing things for the patient's coming. A half hour later, Doctor Comstock arrived, bringing with him an emaciated looking man, not over thirty years old, who appeared to be in the last stages of tuberculosis. The man was unconscious when brought in.

Doctor Comstock explained to me, as the attendants were preparing for the operation, that this man had, only a few years before, completed his studies in a New York medical school, and had received an appointment at the Bellevue Hospital. Owing to ill-health he had given up his work after a little over a year's service, and had returned to his home in Belmont.

Here the man had outfitted himself with a small laboratory and, whenever his health permitted, carried on experimental work that he had begun at college. While no one knew what this experimental work was, for he had been more or less secretive about it, it was generally thought to be concerned with some aspect of blood analysis. The gossip of the town had even gone so far as to say that the frequency of his hemorrhages had led him to carry on this blood analysis with the idea of working out some formula that he might use to replenish his own loss of blood. He had not even taken his family into his confidence.

Before the doctor had proceeded further with his narrative, one of the attendants came in and announced

that everything was in readiness for the operation.

It was a losing fight that was fought that night, for the hemorrhage was well within the lungs, and operative interference was impossible. Shortly after five the following morning, the man died without regaining consciousness.

Doctor Comstock had left a little over an hour before without telling me more of this story which had begun to arouse my interest. It was months afterwards when, as assistant superintendent in a neighboring hospital for the insane, I again met Doctor Comstock, and inquired about the young man whom he had brought in that night.

For a moment, he did not seem to recall the incident to which I referred. I mentioned some details and then he remembered.

"Ah, yes," he replied. "Didn't I ever tell you the whole of that story?"

"No," I answered, "and I have wondered many times since then, inasmuch as the man had been so secretive about his work, just what he might have been doing."

Doctor Comstock replied that he would be glad to tell me, and suggested, as the story was a long one, that I take dinner with him on the following Sunday night. This I promised to do.

It seems that Doctor Comstock had been more interested in this experimental work than I had surmised. And Comstock has always been considered a very canny sort of an individual, but the story he told me that night would have led anyone who knew less than I, to believe that he was listening to the dreams of a dreamer.

We had finished dinner, and leaving Mrs. Comstock on the plea that we wished to smoke, went into the doctor's study.

"Well," said the doctor, as he lighted his pipe, "I have been intending to put this strange tale about young Rollins into a monograph, but it is such a weird story and savors so of the unbelievable that I have been waiting until I receive some reports from the medical experts who are testing the material I gave them.

"You will remember that I told how secretive this man was in all his work," continued the doctor, "and that even his father and mother were unfamiliar with the interior or contents of the laboratory that had been built for him, practically, one might say, in his back-yard. The building was always kept under lock and key, and the greater part of the time the young man slept in the little building.

"I have known the Rollins family a good many years and had taken care of the boy from infancy. So, after the first intense feelings of grief had passed, I had a long talk with his father and mother, and we made a thorough examination of the laboratory at the same time.

"Well, it was a hard experience to put the old folks through after their loss. They little suspected what had been going on in the little building in the yard. From conversation which the boy had had with his parents, and from a note-book and other memoranda which we found around the laboratory, we pieced out a strange

story. There is undoubtedly a love story which should be woven into the experience of this young man, but about that we can only guess.

"Not long after his appointment to Bellevue, he took charge of the nervous out-patient work, and among the visitors were two women—an elderly woman and her daughter. The mother was suffering from Potts' disease; and while Rollins was able to relieve her, he was, of course, unable to stave off the ultimate progress and final outcome of the disease. About a year and a half after the first visit of the couple, Rollins was called to a dingy tenement on Eighty-seventh Street, not far from Third Avenue, and found the old lady within a few hours of death.

"It seems apparent that he would not have left the hospital to go down there merely to relieve the final suffering of the poor woman, when he knew as well as you and I that there were a dozen men in the Emergency Department that he could have called on for the work.

"We found quite a bit of correspondence between the young woman and Rollins, the general trend of which showed that she was anxious to repay the young physician for what he had done for her mother. Several letters were devoted to an effort on her part to get Rollins to accept a money-order for ten dollars which she had sent him and he had returned. Then, there were appointments arranged, and the old gentleman and I figured that the couple must have met a good many times.

"At one of these meetings, as later developments proved, Rollins confided the story of his experimental work and his dreams. Finally he accepted her offer to act as the subject of his experiments. These are the facts I was able to gather from letters and memoranda.

"I shall never forget the spectacle that greeted us as we opened the door inside the short hall leading to the main room of Rollins's laboratory. As I opened the door, a positive maze of glass tubes flashed in the sunlight which flooded the big airy room. I have seen many pieces of chemical apparatus that were very complex, but I have never seen anything to compare with this. After the first glare of the glass tubes and the consequent confusion had left me, I began to realize that this network of tubing started in one part of the room and crossed to the other, entering a long box about two feet wide and six or seven feet in length. The box itself, as I glanced at it, seemed to be of ordinary wooden structure with a glass top and many openings at the side, through which these glass tubes passed.

"Mr. Rollins, Sr., and I, entered the room and began to investigate. I walked over to the wall and commenced a cursory examination of the retorts and bottles that marked the starting-point for the majority of the tubes. I had pulled the stopper from one of the bottles and was gingerly smelling the contents, when a sharp cry of horror from the old gentleman caused me to turn. He stood by the long box, his eyes bulging and his features ashen.

"I rushed across the room and gazed down through the glass top.

I understood the man's surprise and horror, when, through the network of tubes in the box itself, I saw the form of an infant, about three months of age, I should judge. The situation slowly began to dawn on me as I stood there gazing at the strange spectacle. The child had not been dead long. I tried, though in vain, to revive any possible spark of life in the little form by starting the Bunsen burners under the retorts on the bench by the wall. A further examination of the bottles and test-tubes told me of the strong blood and heart stimulants that had been passing along these tubes, and that through others, chemical foods had been introduced.

"The old man voiced my own thoughts. His voice trembled as he said in a low tone, 'His child—his child!' He paused to control his feelings, and then said:

"'For God's sake, don't tell his poor mother. She's broken-hearted now; it might kill her.' The old gentleman was completely unnerved. I finally induced him to sit down and I continued the investigation.

"As I commenced again to rummage around, I began to wonder what had become of the woman and whether we could get in touch with her. 'He must have sent her away,' I thought, 'and perhaps there is some scrap of correspondence which will give a clue.' I spied the chest of drawers over on the back wall and started a systematic search. Rollins moved his chair over to that side of the room and sat down beside me.

"The two upper drawers yielded nothing intelligible. The third drawer was locked. I broke it open. It contained four bundles, each neatly wrapped in white paper. I picked up the one nearest at hand and opened it. I must confess that I was somewhat startled when I pulled out various articles of under-clothing which obviously belonged to a woman. I hated to look at the old gentleman, for I knew his thoughts from the sharp breath that I heard him draw as I opened the bundle. I turned to the others. The second revealed a pair of shoes done up in an old torn petticoat—the third contained a waist, and the fourth a dark blue serge skirt.

"Rollins jumped to his feet. 'He's killed her—he's killed her—my God! my God! my boy has committed murder!' The old man sank back into the chair, and the tears streamed down his face. I tried to tell him that this clothing did not necessarily indicate murder, though I honestly feared it. I told him that possibly the woman had died, giving birth to the child, and that he had secretly buried the body to save the family disgrace; or that the woman might not be dead at all—that this might be extra clothing that she had put away before she left. He was inconsolable, however, and I decided that the rest of the investigation had better be carried on alone. I began to pick up the clothing and replace it in the drawer, when I saw pinned to the skirt an envelope."

Doctor Comstock stopped his narrative for a moment and took his wallet from his pocket. He drew out an old soiled envelope.

"This," he said, holding it up to the

light, "was what I found." He pulled out the sheet and began to read:

"'Dear Father:—Fearing that these hemorrhages, which seem to be geting worse rather than better, may catch me unaware sometime, or that you might become curious and misunderstand this work that I have been carrying on here, I have put this letter in a place where I felt that it would be found if you started to investigate, but would be safe otherwise. I have practically proved the old theory which every medical man knows, that the process which we call old age takes place between birth and the twenty-fifth year. Old Doc. Comstock or any physician, will tell you about the curious cell growth of the human, and will tell you why medical men have believed this theory. They have always said that if this cell decay, which we commonly call growth, could be stopped, we would approximate something akin to perpetual life, or at least prolong life until the principal organs of the body wore out.

"'But, to stop this cell life of the body would, as every one knows, cause death. The problem was to change this process in the cells—to reverse it if possible, and this I have succeeded in doing. The infant in the box was a woman twenty years of age. My note book and letters that I have saved will tell enough to substantiate my story, and the enclosed statement of the young woman herself tells the rest.

"'Don't let the burners go out. If it is too late when you read this letter, save the retorts and test tubes at all costs. Give them to Comstock with this letter. He will know what to do.' Signed, 'Bert.' And here is the other," continued Comstock.

"'To whom it may concern: This is to say that I voluntarily gave myself up to experimentation by Dr. Albert Rollins, and I fully realize the possible results. Doctor Rollins performed a great service for me and my mother when she was suffering from an incurable disease. This debt of gratitude I wished to repay. When the normal opportunities of payment had been denied me, and I learned something of the work of Doctor Rollins and its value to humanity if successful, I begged to be allowed to give myself for the experiment. If it fails—it doesn't matter, for I have no kin to mourn my loss, and little to live for.' Signed, 'Mabel Hamilton.'

"There—there are the facts."

"That is a weird story," I said; "but what was the outcome?"

"Well," resumed the doctor, "I set about to analyse the chemicals, and soon found myself in the realm of organic chemistry that I know little or nothing about, and fearing that I might waste the small amount of material that I had, I have turned the whole problem over to Doctor Friedrichs at the Medical School, and have placed the infant in the hands of Doctor Wallace for microscopic examination of the cell structure.

"Rollins has done a wonderful piece of work and, even if Frederichs and Wallace fail at this time to lay bare the whole secret, they have already learned enough to make matters fairly simple for an ultimate solution."

# The Empty Room

BY C. CLEVES MACKIE

*Four millionaires "set-in" for a game of cards in a private room of their club. A darkey servant guards a door, the only known exit from the card room. When the door is forced open the players are gone.*

AT nine o'clock that evening, Mr. Alexander Drake led the way into a little card room on the third floor of the Unity Club, and having settled himself with three friends around table under the central light, he slipped a crisp greenback into the tingling palm of Timpkins, and bade him stand guard outside the closed door.

At nine-fifteen, Timpkins was ordered to bring a fresh pack of cards, and the four men settled down to a sober rubber of whist.

At nine-thirty, Timpkins brought liquid refreshments as per request. At ten o'clock, he brought more refreshments of the same character. It was exactly ten-thirty when he barred the doorway against the entrance of another servant.

"Ah'm sorry, Ferdinand, but Mistah Drake's orders is dat no one am to enter dat room till he's finished playin' cyards," said Timpkins, regretfully.

Ferdinand, who was new to the staff, rolled the white of an eye toward the forbidden room.

"Am dat gentleman de milyunair whut dey's all talkin' about?" he whispered.

Timpkins nodded loftily.

"Dat am Milyunair Drake," he admitted; "and whut's more, boy, dere's three more milyunairs shut up in dat little room! I expect dey's as much as two hundred milyun in dere!"

"Golly!" gasped Ferdinand. "Is dey got it all wid 'em?"

Timpkins smiled tolerantly.

"I reckon not. It's Mistah Drake's buthday and he's been dinin' his fren's in de private banquet room; seems like he wouldn't play cyards nowhere but in dis yere little room; and dey cain't nobody enter till dey goes out. I'se heah on gyard."

"I spect you ain't doin' it foh nothin'," murmured Ferdinand enviously, as he moved away.

By way of response, Timpkins crackled the crisp greenback.

Presently the elevator disgorged a merry quartette of club members who made at once for the little card room which Timpkins was guarding.

Timpkins lifted a deprecating black hand.

"I'se sorry, gentlemen, but de room is occupied!"

"That's bally hard luck!" groaned a stout, ruddy-faced man. "This is my last try for a place to have a quiet game. Come on down to the Exor, boys."

The elevator arose and yawned to receive them again, and then dropped to the lower floor.

Timpkins shifted his weary feet and wished the millionaires would go home.

"Tain't respectable for a lot of dem gran'father old men to sit up to all hours gamblin' dere milyuns away," he muttered peevishly.

At that moment a stout fussy little man paused before the door. Timpkins began his apologetic remonstrance, but the fussy little man brushed the negro aside and opened the door of the little card room. He looked inside and then turned a wrathful face to the servant.

"How dare you tell me that the room is occupied when it is empty?" he roared. "I shall report you at once."

As he pattered toward the elevator, Timpkins slid around the doorway and poked his woolly head into the room.

It was empty.

The four card players had vanished. A strong light shone down upon a litter of cards and empty glasses on the table, a box of choice cigars and brass smoking trays. The air was heavy with dead tobacco smoke, and there was no sign of the four millionaires.

Timpkins stared hard. "I ain't been asleep, dat's a fac'," he muttered in bewilderment; "and dey ain't but one doah and de windows air all locked fas' and tight."

While Timpkins still gaped at the empty room, Bently, the house manager, arrived with the fussy fat man who was complaining bitterly of the wretched service at the club.

"I shall bring this matter before the board of directors, sir," he fumed, as they reached the card-room door.

"I'm sure there is some mistake, Mr. Smithers," soothed Bently, as he laid a strong hand on Timpkins's coat-tail and jerked the discomfited menial into the corridor. "Now, see here, Timpkins," he said sternly, "I want to know why you told Mr. Smithers that the card room was occupied when it was not?"

"Befo' de Lord, Mistah Bently, I ain't stirred from dis doah—it happened disaway—" and Timpkins related at great length, the incidents of the evening, from the moment when Mr. Drake had enlisted his services as guardian of the card-room door and riveted the bargain with a five-dollar bill, to the instant when Mr. Smithers had discovered the empty room.

"You've been asleep," decided the manager sharply.

But Timpkins repeated his story again and again, until Bently, and even the skeptical Smithers, were inclined to believe him.

"They are in some other room," said Bently at last, although he admitted that the only exit from the card room was the door which Timpkins had guarded, and he made a thorough search of the rambling club building which had been remodeled from a block of brownstone dwellings.

At midnight the club manager, his assistants, and the entire staff of servants, knew that something was wrong in that ancient and exclusive organization.

Four prominent men had mysteriously disappeared from a closed room and left no clue behind them. The

check boy in the coat room reported that the missing gentlemen had not called for their hats and overcoats, and the doorkeeper swore that they had not passed his portal. No one had seen Alexander Drake and his three friends from the moment when they had entered the little card room.

Bently studied the litter of cards on the table, and declared the game had been abandoned at a most interesting point.

Granted that the players had lost interest in the game, how could they have disappeared from the room? There were no signs of a struggle unless one noticed that a picture on one wall hung rather awry. Bently straightened it, and made a mental note to have the picture hung higher, where it would be out of the way.

At two o'clock, having received an anxious inquiry from Mr. Drake's valet, who was waiting up for his master and his guests, Bently telephoned to a private detective agency. It was the manager's duty to see that the matter did not get into the papers.

In a short time appeared a foxy little man from the agency, Rennard by name, who nosed around the building, catechised every one on the premises, and finally confided to Bently that in his opinion the four millionaires had been murdered, their bodies disposed of in some mysterious way, and that the murderer was still in the house.

"But who in creation could commit such a crime with Timpkins on guard at the door?" asked Bently wearily.

Rennard smiled in a superior manner. "Why, Timpkins, of course!" he retorted triumphantly.

In spite of Bently's protests, the terrified Timpkins was carried off to be privately interviewed, and later to be held as a suspicious character in the matter of the disappearance of Alexander Drake and his friends.

When Rennard and his prisoner had departed, the telephone bell rang sharply. A thin voice came crisply over the wire:

"Unity Club? This is the *Morning Star* office. Please connect me with someone who can tell me about the attempted robbery at the club this morning."

"Go to the devil!" was Bently's misleading direction as he slammed the receiver on its hook.

An hour earlier, while Detective Rennard still searched for clues within, something was happening around on the Thirty-seventh Street side of the club.

Policeman Dennis Breen, on fixed post at the corner, detached himself from the pavement to ease his aching feet with a little stroll in the dark shadow of the building.

Suddenly, before his very eyes, the pavement yawned and disgorged a human being.

Dennis Breen's arm was strong, and his hand was heavy upon the collar of the individual whom he jerked up out of the coal hole and thumped violently upon the sidewalk. In a trice the man's wrists were handcuffed. All this time he had uttered no sound.

"Any more of yez?" hissed Breen, and receiving no reply he bellowed the question down the coal hole.

From the sooty depths below the

Unity Club building, there came an exceedingly bitter cry.

Breen leaped to his signal box, summoned aid, and went back to his silent prisoner.

Fifteen minutes later, when the patrol wagon backed up to the door of the police station, four prisoners were escorted before the sergeant while officer Breen made a charge against them.

When they were searched, it was discovered that beneath the layer of soft-coal dust that covered them from head to foot and rendered their features indistinguishable, each one wore evening clothes. Some handsome jewelry was removed from them, and they were hustled into four cells.

The sergeant flicked some coal dust from his fingers, and examined the articles which had been removed from the prisoners. There were four diamond rings, four thin gold watches, four wallets containing cards and fat rolls of money. Everything was grimy with coal dust.

"Call the Unity Club and see if anyone is up there," he ordered.

Later, when Bently stamped in, indignant at being disturbed from a nap he was enjoying on his office sofa, he glared at the sergeant.

"Burglars at the club?" he snorted incredulously. "You'll have to show me! First I've heard about it—unless they've kidnapped four baldheaded millionaires who disappeared this evening."

"There are four of the chaps, and desperate-looking fellows at that—they could have a millionaire apiece and not worry! Breen, bring the prisoners in."

When they appeared, the manager of the Unity Club stared at them with puzzled eyes.

They were desperate-looking characters indeed, giving outward evidence of the coal heap from which they had been dragged. Black from head to foot, with only the whites of their eyes showing oddly under the sooty lashes, they looked like members of a minstrel troupe.

They were rather small and wiry individuals, but there was a grimness about their bearing that hinted of strength in reserve. Secrecy locked their lips.

Bently stared at them, and the four suspects gave him back stare for stare, almost impudently.

"Gentlemen Raffles—all," remarked the sergeant facetiously.

A sickly grin overspread the manager's face. He turned to the sergeant.

"These gentlemen," he explained slowly, "are guests of the club. As such, they had a perfect right to leave the clubhouse by any of its exits. If they chose the coal hole that's their affair. Of course your men are to be commended for doing their duty—and I can assure you that they will not go unrewarded. I will vouch for these gentlemen, Sergeant." Here Bently winked at the sergeant, and that official handed over the valuables he had gleaned from the prisoners, and Bently went away with his charges.

After they had passed the open-mouthed watchman, and were on their way up the stairs to the baths on the top floor, Alexander Drake took a roll of bills from his

pocket and turned to the manager.

"By the way," he said, "just give this to Timpkins, will you, please?"

"Timpkins," said Bently sourly, "will not be in until morning; he's held under suspicion of having committed four murders!"

And he could have sworn that four pair of shoulders shook as the grimy men plodded toward the stairway.

The next morning, Timpkins was summoned to assist the manager, who was in the third-floor card room with a workman.

"Just lift down this picture, Timpkins," said Bently, and as the servant removed it from its position low down on the wall, there was disclosed an opening two feet square. From the opening a polished chute led down into darkness.

"'Scuse me, sah," said Timpkins respectfully, "but might I ask whah dat hole goes to?"

"That hole, Timpkins," said Bently patiently, "is an abandoned laundry chute. This part of the clubhouse was once a private dwelling, and the chute has never been closed. I am now having it nailed up in case some club member, smitten with sentimental memories of his boyhood days spent in this same house, might try to repeat a boyish stunt and recklessly slide down the laundry chute to the soiled clothes basket in the laundry in the cellar."

"And what would happen if dey did do dat?" gasped Timpkins.

Bently smiled grimly.

"They would land up to their necks in soft coal and probably be pinched by the police," he explained.

Timpkins thrust a hand in his pocket, brought out a wad of soiled bills and fingered them pensively.

"I wondered how dat money got all kivered with coal dust," he said simply.

# The Fingers of Death

BY STIRLING WILSON

*Many strange tales have come up from the sea but few more weird than this story of a sea bully's punishment and death.*

THERE is horror enough on land, with its desolate gulches and roaring dark forests, but far worse, I say, is the clutching terror of the sea, with the heartless loneliness of it all. It's man to man there under the empty sky; and the men on the phantom ships below are always singing their harbinger of death in the still nights. I've always found it so.

I had signed as second mate on the schooner *Christie,* and I'll say for her that a neater, tighter little craft never skipped out of Glasgow Harbor. Her captain—may the saints pity him—was a fiend if ever one trod a deck. He was known from Calcutta to Brazil as a devil and a driver, and his crews, poor dogs, were always made up of deserters from the service and sulking derelicts without souls, who would sail a ship to hell for a glass of rum.

How could I know MacDougall? I was far off my usual course in Glasgow, with not a berth in sight; so when the old man offered me a chance as second mate I couldn't sign quick enough.

We were bound for Jamaica with a cargo of wool, and we got under way with a bowling wind behind us that lasted well out to sea. Everything was trim, and it looked to be a good run. The crew mustered nine men, five of them Scots, two Swedes, one Englishman and one Portuguese; an unlikely lot they were, too, but tolerable seamen.

Besides the old man, the mate and myself, there was a boy to wait on the table in the after cabin, and to save the officers from dirty work, I reckon. I've sailed with men of every country, but I couldn't name the land that cabin-boy came from, and he wasn't telling. He was the most silent, hermit-like human I ever saw on board ship. You'll find a lot like that ashore, but you'd think the loneliness and hard life afloat would draw them out, but not him. He didn't give any odds, and he wasn't asking any, (not that he would have been likely to get any mercy on a ship of old man MacDougall's.)

I never knew the boy's name. The whole crew called him "Pedro." He might have been sixteen or forty, for all we knew and for all he said about it. He had a thin grey face with a sharp, knife-like nose, and parchment skin. His lips were thin and white, and were always writhing and licking in a horrible leer, which was a thousand times worse on account of a paralysis of one eye, which would suddenly slip out of focus with the

other, and then slip back again.

In spite of his evil looks and disposition, he might have got by without arousing any particular wonder, if it hadn't been for his left hand, which had but three fingers. They hadn't been cut off, either; he was born that way, and it seemed as if his fingers had grown and his hand hadn't, for his hand was small and shriveled, whereas his fingers were long and hairy. It resembled the talon of some monster bird of prey, and he had a peculiar habit of holding the hand on his chest, just below his throat, and twisting and stretching those fingers until it made your flesh creep to watch him.

I've never seen a more repulsive human. No wonder he couldn't feel sociable with other men. To see him sneaking about the decks, his feet making no more noise than a cat's, and his face darting up sideways to give a glimpse of his weird face, and his crippled hand busy at his throat, reminded you of some strange, ghoulish animal that you didn't dare turn your back on.

I remember once waking up suddenly from a sound sleep, after a hard watch, and finding that leering death's head staring at me, ten feet away. I started up in a cold sweat and cursed him out of the cabin, but I couldn't sleep any more that night.

Even MacDougall, who was said to fear nothing on God's earth, didn't relish that cabin-boy. He seldom beat or kicked him, and the boy probably got less ill-treatment than any one of the men forward, who all knew the weight of the old man's fist before we had been out a day. However, MacDougall took it out in cursing him, and the more indifferent Pedro seemed to the captain's oaths, the more fervently he was cursed. The captain took a barbarous delight in devising oaths to torment the boy on his weird appearance and especially about his claw of a hand.

When the poor wretch came within range of the captain's curses, he displayed no feeling, unless it was that his lips twisted a little more than usual and the three fingers writhed more feverishly than ordinarily.

As I said, the voyage promised to be a good one, and Mr. Matthews, the mate, and I, were congratulating ourselves on the uneventfulness of the log, when, four days out of Glasgow, the captain began drinking, and from then on it was a different ship—a floating hell.

There is nothing worse than a drunken skipper, especially if he is a man of MacDougall's type. Matthews and I saw trouble ahead and we ventured to argue with him, but we might as well have talked to the phosphorescence in our wake. He looked at us for a minute out of his sot's eyes, and then told us to mind our own business. He was captain on his own ship and he'd brook no interference from a couple of lubberly upstarts. So we gave up trying to remonstrate with him, and hoped for good winds and a quick run to the Indies.

One morning the captain staggered aft to the cabin after his watch was up. The wind was blowing fairly hard, and coming as it was, in gusts and flaws, it was a hard job to keep the ship from losing headway. The

rain had been coming down in torrents all night, and MacDougall had resorted pretty often to the rum, so by morning he was very drunk and very irritable.

As he lurched down the companionway, he tripped over Pedro, who was unfortunate enough to have gone to sleep just at the foot of the ladder. The captain turned around, cursing, and kicked the boy with his heavy sea boot. Pedro sprang up, grimacing as usual, and holding his side. I reckon some of his ribs must have been broken. The captain kicked him again, knocking him against the cabin wall, where he crouched without a sound, feeling his throat with his lame hand. He didn't say a word or utter a groan, but the leer on his face was unearthly.

The captain looked at him for a minute and then turned away; Pedro crept noiselessly up the ladder. After that he was pretty careful to give the old man a wide berth, and the latter, being always drunk, didn't go out of his way to molest him. The boy grew weaker, and also thinner, if that could be. I tried to get him to let me look at his injury, but he just snarled at me and limped away, so I let him alone. He never took his eyes off the captain when he was within sight of him, but followed him with a look that can't be expressed. It was too strong for hate; it was a kind of inhuman eagerness, like that of a snake. If MacDougall hadn't been too drunk to see, he might well have feared it.

As luck would have it, Pedro chanced to come within reach of the old man when the latter was just fighting drunk. Before he could get out of the way, the captain had knocked him down and kicked him into the scuppers, where he lay motionless.

He was such a hulk of skin and bones before, that I was looking for serious consequences if MacDougall should beat him up again. I walked over to the spot, and was pretty well wrought up to find that Pedro would never get up again. The ship fell off a point just then, and the moonlight got down into the dark spot where he lay; and I saw the most shivering sight that ever blasted a man's eyes.

That hideous face, spattered with blood, and blue as my coat, was contorted into an expression that makes my blood turn cold to think on. It was a look that I'll swear was never seen on a man's face before.

I started back when I saw it, and I could feel the hair rising on my cold scalp, and a lump of fear in my throat. I tried to close those staring white eyes but it was no go. Then I calmed down and called the mate. He was taken worse than I was when he saw it, and said, with his teeth chattering, "There'll be hell to pay for this, man." He looked aft. "The bloody devil!"

We covered the body with a tarpaulin and laid it amidship. Matthews and I calculated not to say anything to the captain, but to let the law take its course. We agreed not to defend the murderer.

The next day we told the men, but one of the Swedes had seen the whole thing and it was common property. We laid Pedro out, uglier a thousand times than he ever was alive, and the men got canvas and needles to

get him ready for his last cruise.

Just at that minute, the captain staggered forward with blood in his eye. One glance at the thing on the deck turned him crazy, and he sprang into the midst of the circle, swearing and raving; and picking the body up, he started to hurl it out over the rail. Strange enough, Pedro's three fingers caught like a hook in the captain's coat. He screamed and struck at them, and then we heard the splash below.

The men stood as if petrified for a second; then they rushed to the side, to find—what we already knew—the corpse was floating. MacDougall had gone aft again, and the crew went about their work with white faces and trembling hands, because sailormen know that a ship is cursed if a dead man is given to the fishes without a burial and a shot at his feet.

After that day, MacDougall drank no more. I don't know whether his rum had given out, or whether he was afraid of what he saw when he was drunk; but anyway, he was sober and haggard. He left the handling of the ship to the mate and myself, and kept pretty much to his cabin. When he did go out on deck he seemed uneasy, and kept glancing over his shoulder as if he thought someone was following him. Then he used to sneak up to Matthews and me and get chummy. He told us stories of phantom ships, and the weird tale of the "Helmsman's Ghost," and asked us if we believed in spirits and the like. I never saw a man change so. He was like a whipped cur.

One night he came on deck, looking even more drawn than usual, and said he was going aloft to let the wind clear his head. After he had clambered up the ratlines, Matthews and I stood talking, speculating on the chances for a good wind.

"From the looks of the moon," he was saying, "I look for a——"

He got no farther. A long shuddering scream grated our very souls. We looked up into the dark mass of canvas overhead; for we knew a man screams like that only once. A whirling black hulk dropped like a stone from the rigging and crashed on the deck with a crunching, grinding sound.

We rushed to it. Yes, it was MacDougall—dead. His face was grey mottled with black, and was twisted into a form that I'll swear was like that death-mask of Pedro's.

I heard a gasp of horror. Matthews was pointing to the dead man's throat with a shaking hand. There, in three distinct black lines, were—the prints of *three fingers.*

# Luke McLuke Says

BY J. SYME HASTINGS

One reason why a girl can act kittenish before she is married is because kittens always grow up.

You can always land a sucker by telling him that he is too smart to bite.

There is hope for our women folks. They may wear freak clothes, but they lost no time in sitting down on the movement to revive the bustle.

It has just about gotten to a stage where a Princess who can play a piano with her feet regards with supreme contempt the common ordinary persons who have to use their hands to manipulate the ivories.

The members of the Hand Holders Union are always in bad with father. In winter they consume too much gas and in summer they consume too much moonlight.

As long as the styles make it necessary to use twice as much goods to a pair of trousers as it does to make a skirt, the girls are going to let the men wear the trousers.

It isn't very hard to keep in touch with the styles. If a girl looks as though she was losing something she is dressed right up to the minute.

When a family consists of a wife, a husband and a poodle, you often have a hard time figuring out which is the dog.

When a girl finds either a pimple or a dimple on her face she will sit up half the night watching it grow.

Lots of girls who don't mind wearing a dirty shirtwaist and a greasy skirt that you can see, wouldn't think of wearing a combination that you can't see unless it is absolutely clean.

The old-fashioned woman who used to have a pocket in her dress now has a daughter who raises a big bump on the outside of her skirt when she carries a dime in her stocking.

And can-openers were mighty scarce in the old days when a bride thought a cook stove was a dandy wedding present.

Prayer may be good stuff once in while, but the fellow who puts blisters on his hands gets more than the lad who puts blisters on his knees.

Newspaper are great institutions, but why does an editor always manage to find room for a picture of a 10-cent girl who is suing a 15-cent man for $100,000 for breach of promise?

A man may admit that your wife is handsomer than his, but he will always maintain that his baby and his dog are smarter than yours.

The high cost of living wasn't such a much in the old days when the groceryman used to put a potato on the spout of the oil can for a stopper and a man wasn't afraid to carry an oil can home.

The old-fashioned woman who used to wear a red flannel petticoat, a black alpaca petticoat and a white cotton petticoat now has a daughter who wears a pair of tights and a lace curtain.

Never tell a corn-fed girl that she is all wool and a yard wide.

# A Fulfilled Mission

BY M. J. NEWMAN

*Here is a new version of the outraged husband. We question if his victim was more surprised than you will be to learn of the punishment he metes out to the man who desecrated his home.*

HIS mission was nearing its end. Here, in this wild and woolly part of the West, land of the rattler and the ghosts of men violently slain, he was at last to meet the man whom he would rather meet than any one who had done him good or evil.

Mason's trip to this gambler-infested Nevada village was not intentional. He had been on his way direct to Frisco, when a friend advised him that Norton had been a resident of H——, Nevada, the past year—a mining engineer with a taste for gambling. Mason spent a couple of days in Salt Lake City, then changed his route.

Unable to sleep, now the sun was throwing its rays full blast into his window, he lay in bed and thought of how Norton had continually crossed his life's path. Ten years before, Mason was in love with Kitty—his one real love; Kitty of the glorious eyes and the figure that would have made Chabas gasp with delight. Mason was in the lead for her hand and heart until Norton came into the game. Then, when the game was ended, Norton, not Mason, was Kitty's husband. Norton was the victor, and Mason had to leave town for lo, many moons, ere his great, hopeless love would permit his return to the city of his dreadful night.

Then five years passed before Norton's ominous shadow once more darkened his path. Three years before Norton's second advent, Mason had so far put aside his love as to lead Elizabeth to the altar. And with her he lived three years, until Norton came, with his wonderful way with a maid, or a matron, for that matter, and Norton and Elizabeth disappeared. He lost track of them as completely as though the earth had sucked them up.

From his bed he looked out of the window, over the mountains. Here and there was a top covered with snow, although it was midsummer. Some tops were bare. Their sides held great masses of trees to a certain height, then shrubbery further up, until finally came snow. At the base of one of the mountains a river flowed. Here and there, a cabin perched part way up.

He arose from his bed, pulled down the shade, and dressed. Modesty here seemed an uncomfortable pretence, as there were few women in the village. H—— was a headquarters where men, fresh from the ranches and mines, would stop off to buy "store duds" as an outfit before going to Frisco or Los Angeles with their many months of accumulations

to "paint" the town, returning shabby and worn out from return journeys by rail, unsanctioned by the ticket sellers of the railroad, and after a continual game of hide-and-seek with the brakemen. Frequently the lure of the "Palais de Chance" kept them in H——, making their return journey much shorter, as the result was always an empty purse and a splitting head.

Mason put up the shade, put on a clean collar, then took a view of his nearer surroundings. Across the street was the "Palais de Chance," a hostelry where roamed houris whose idea of their mission in life was to separate man from his roll, in competition with the games that ran openly in the "Palace." These ladies with missions in life made their appearance only after eight, these summer days. One would hardly believe that this miserable, dead, pale creature slinking down the street in a wrapper, would in a few hours be metamorphosed into the lovely girl who would be a pal for the evening, or as long as money lasted. Disease and death seemed written on her young-old face—nature's flag proclaiming her one of the pirates of the earth.

But the day was beautiful. Wild flowers were not afraid to grow in the vacant spots between the houses. The flowers and the grass lent a fragrance to the air as it blew across one's face in torrid gusts. The trees on the mountain sides suggested a refreshing shade.

Civilization did its best to make the scene ugly. Bottles and jugs lay even at the side of the main road, telling of headaches eagerly sought, prodigally bought.

Mason looked at the bottles, at the "Palais de Chance." It was in such surroundings that one might look for a man of Norton's qualities. He was not surprised. He felt that before such a meeting he would do well to eat a hearty meal. He took up his revolver, examined the cartridges, placed it in his pocket, and sauntered down the stairs.

In the shabby dining room, he could see nothing of the man he wished to meet. Neither of the two women eating leisurely at a far end of the room was his wife. Not being much of a woman's man—his experience having soured him—he paid little further attention to them.

The waiter—a burly man who might have served better as a prize fighter or longshoreman—asked him for his order. This was a beefsteak, and it soon came—generous to extravagance, and tasting fresh and pleasant to him who had eaten the "lady's meals" that the dining-car waiters had placed before him. This seemed more of a man's world. He made a leisurely meal, his eyes on the alert, but his expectation of seeing Norton was not gratified.

All men are procrastinators. He felt that, having waited five years to meet this man who had stolen two women from him—one the dearest, the other the nearest—he could wait a few hours longer. He returned to his room and tried to read a magazine, but the heat made him listless, then utterly inattentive, and finally replacing the magazine in his suitcase, he decided to take a stroll.

Obtaining some sandwiches from the waiter, he set out for the mountains. A short cut took him out of the village and onto a dusty road leading thereto. After a hard hour's walk, during which he met no one, he arrived at a spot that promised shade. He looked at his watch. It was nearly one o'clock.

Stretched at full length in the shade of a giant tree, his thoughts recurred to Kitty of the beautiful face and figure. Even today, as through a haze, he could see her, lithe yet with a promise of fullness, a walking poem, leader of the dance and queen of their social circle by reason of her undoubted beauty. He wondered how a rather ugly fellow like Norton could attract such a woman. Norton was not richer than he, nor better educated—in fact, Mason felt sure he could match him in any of the masculine qualities. Then why had Kitty finally chosen Norton? He was puzzling over the problem, old as the world, which will be enacted as long as sex is sex.

Then his thoughts recurred to Elizabeth, who had been his wife. For three years they had lived together. Then Norton had again come into his life, and when he left Chicago for Heaven knows where, Elizabeth had forsaken home and husband to be his companion. What was this man's fascination?

Feeling hungry, he ate his sandwiches, then spent some time looking for a spring. He finally located a small but clean trickle of water and refreshed himself. Then the heat and a full stomach claimed their due and he slept.

He awoke at about seven. It was still light, but he felt that he had better be on his way. Bathing his face in the spring, it refreshed him somewhat and he set out for the village.

Two hours later, refreshed, well-fed, sprucely clad, he stepped into the gaming room of the "Palais de Chance." His revolver was in a pocket convenient for immediate action, if necessary. It had been a constant companion, as in his wanderings of the past few years he had had more than one occasion to draw it.

The gaming room was a typical western gambling place, with its wheels, attendants, and its motley crowd—white men of all nationalities, half-breed Indians, Mexicans, and here and there a woman. Chinamen, inveterate gamblers, indulged in their favorite fan-tan. The Americans seated at the tables seemed to prefer poker.

Mason scanned the room—at first he could not make out his man; then, when about to give up, he felt certain that the man whose back was to him was Norton. He was playing with two Spaniards. Deeply immersed in his cards, he paid no attention as Mason changed his position so as to get a better view of his face. It *was* Norton.

Taking a seat in a secluded corner, Mason waited, considering a plan of action. He decided he would not disclose himself to Norton until he should find him alone. He waited for nearly an hour, when the black-haired Spaniards rose from their chairs, broke. He heard Norton invite them to come for their revenge the following night; then the two filed

out of the room. Ordering a drink, Norton leisurely lit a cigarette and remained at his table.

Mason felt that now was his time. Norton had not yet noticed him. Mason got up and approached his man from the rear; then he tapped him on the shoulder.

The gambler turned negligently in his chair, then a look of fear came into his eyes. His hand sought his pocket, but Mason forestalled him. Mason's revolver was out before Norton could draw, and Norton's hand slid to his side, empty.

"None of that," said Mason. "I can draw a gun a fraction of a second quicker than most men in the West, and that fraction is all I require." He seated himself before Norton and negligently fingered the cards.

Norton seemed fascinated by the sight of the man whose woman he had stolen. His eyes were dilated with fear and his eyelids made slits of his eyes. His stomach seemed to rise in his throat and a lump take its place. He grew hot and then cold, by turns. He recollected the swift justice of the West that meted out punishment and then judged the criminal. He waited, convinced his last minute had come, yet not daring to move.

Mason, after calmly considering, spoke: "Norton, to start with, you and I will play some hands at cards."

Norton was stunned. What new kind of torture was Mason preparing? Where would this lead?

Mason broke in upon his fevered thoughts again: "And, mind, no crookedness. I can detect it instantly. Somehow, I always could beat you at cards. It's going to be two-handed poker. We want no others in this game."

They were singularly alone. The other players in the room, intent upon their own winnings and losses, had paid no attention to this little byplay.

"Shuffle the cards," commanded Mason; "and no tricks."

"I'll play square, Mason. At last I'll play square with you." Norton dealt out the cards.

The game lasted a half hour, Mason making all suggestions, Norton not daring to contradict him even once. Under the circumstances, the game was entirely in favor of the newcomer, and Mason had "cleaned" Norton out of some nine hundred dollars when the half hour was up. Mason rose to his feet, a look of triumph on his face. Norton sat rigid, his face livid.

Finally, after what seemed to Norton an unendurable period, Mason spoke.

"Norton," he said, "you robbed me of Kitty, my first and only love."

Norton did not dare reply.

"For which I thank you, seeing she proved a woman who spent her husband's last cent on clothes, cards and entertainments far beyond her means.

"Then you robbed me of Elizabeth, my wife, who nagged the deuce out of me, but never gave me legal cause for divorce until then. And now I win nine hundred from you.

"Norton, you've always been my meat. I promised myself, if ever I was in your neighborhood, I'd thank you personally and invite you to have the best in the house. Come over to the bar."

# The Marshal

BY E. S. TUPPER

*We all know the lure of amateur photography, but here's where the hobby saved a man from the net of the law and routed a band of "greasers" with notches in their guns.*

H Beppo! My poor Beppo!"

The man knelt by the horse, tears rolling down his thin cheeks. He pressed the animal's head against his heart in a frenzy of grief. The dying horse looked up at his master with fast glazing eyes filled with almost human love and suffering.

The man sprang to his feet, and wringing his hands, walked to and fro, sobbing as hysterically as a woman. "Oh, my poor Beppo!" he cried, "my poor Beppo!" And then, "Oh, God! what will become of us —what will become of us?"

He was youthful in appearance, scarcely more than a boy; but his face showed the unmistakable ravages of sorrow and fear; altogether, one might say, he was well on the verge of a nervous collapse.

However, he made a desperate effort to pull himself together. Wiping his tears away, and going to a rude shack nearby, where his blankets and harnesses hung, he hastily selected one of the former and returning, laid it tenderly over the dead animal. Then with one anguished look at his pet, he walked unsteadily up the path leading from the corral to the rough little cabin.

At the back of the house was a tiny "lean-to" or shed, in which were stored the tinned meats, and the strings of peppers and onions, with other vegetables which Janet had saved for the winter. There was a wooden table here with a pot or two on it, together with a few beans and potatoes. It was approaching the dinner hour at the lonely little ranch near Douglas, Arizona. Janet had evidently started in her preparations, only to be called suddenly away.

Richard Ward scarce noted these details, but went on through the low doorway into the kitchen, the living room of the place he called home. He saw that here too, in the big sink and on the stove, were some signs of the noontide meal. But what most riveted his attention, was the bottle of whiskey on a table across the kitchen. Going hastily to it, he poured a stiff drink in a tumbler standing there, and tossed it off. The raw liquor burned his throat, and catching up a second glass filled with water, he swallowed the half of it. Then he threw himself into a chair, and bowing his head on his hands, remained moody and abstracted.

Suddenly, Janet, his wife, came backing into the kitchen from a tiny dark pantry in one corner. She was a sweet, fresh-cheeked girl of nineteen, with brown hair rippling about

her pretty head, and honest, hazel eyes, which at that moment were intently fastened on a photographic negative she held up in one hand, while in the other she carried very carefully a small glass about half filled with liquid.

"Look Dick!" she cried excitedly, "look!" Here's the negative I made of the shack this morning. I couldn't do anything until I had finished developing it."

Her husband turned wearily in his chair. "Is it all right?" he idly asked.

"It's fine!" she cried enthusiastically. "Come, look at it."

Richard rose languidly and going around the table, looked at the negative over her shoulder.

"Oh, yes," he muttered, "that's the bum old shack, all right!"

"Oh, Dick dear, don't speak of it like that, don't," she pleaded earnestly. "Remember, it's our home, our—our refuge."

"Refuge—yes," he said sullenly.

"I didn't mean anything, dear boy; you know that, don't you?"

"Oh, yes, Janet, I know," he said tenderly; "I know you, girl, all right."

"Oh, Dick," the girl ran on as if to distract his mind from dismal topics, "you can't imagine what a delight it is to make these negatives. And the little pantry is just an ideal developing room. It was so good of you, dearest, to get the camera for me. I look back and wonder how I lived without it. How did I get through those awful months without any diversion? And oh, by the way, dear, while I think of it, next time you go to Douglas, you must be sure to get me some more cyanide of potassium; that's all I've got now," indicating the glass, "and without my deadly poison I can't develop, you know."

"I don't know," said her husband with a deep sigh, "that I'll ever go to Douglas again."

Janet was startled. "Why, Dick!" she exclaimed, "what do you mean?"

"Oh," cried Richard with sudden desperation, "I've been trying to get up courage to tell you—"

"Dick—what?" she interrupted.

"Poor Beppo died about twenty minutes ago," he finished, with his eyes on the floor.

"Beppo—died;" the girl spoke as if dazed. Slowly she set down the glass of cyanide on the table by the whiskey.

"Yes," went on her husband, never looking at her, "the poor animal's gone. I did all I could for him last night, and this morning he seemed much better. I had great hope of his recovery. But just now, when I went out to the corral, I saw at once he was much worse. I was fussing over him when," his voice shook, "he looked up at me, gave a groan—" He could not finish the sentence..

"Oh, poor Beppo," moaned the girl.

"What I'll do now is beyond me," said Richard. "The walking's not very good between here and Douglas. And there's another thing, Janet, I've got to tell you, and that is, that you must not go out on the trail again alone. Jim Dawson was here just before Beppo died and brought the news that Manuel Estrada's gang is over the border again."

"Manuel Estrada!" Janet's face went white to the lips.

"Yes," replied Richard. "They

killed two cowboys at the Buena Vista Ranch last night."

"Killed? Oh, Dick!"

"Not only that, but they burned the ranch house. They're full of bad whiskey. They'd sell their souls for a dram, you know. God!" he cried in agony, "what if they should pay us a call! And now Beppo's gone, we're absolutely helpless. Oh, why, why did I ever bring you to this barbarous country?" He wrung his hands helplessly.

"Dick dearest," said the girl calmly, "don't worry. We're in God's hands. I'm not afraid of those beasts. And if the worst comes, it's better, far better for us to go together, than—that you should die, alone, back there."

"Hands up!"

The husband and wife turned slowly, like automatons. In the doorway to the shed stood a man pointing a revolver at Richard. He was about forty, powerfully built, with a weather-beaten face, piercing grey eyes under a thick shock of dark brown hair, lightly touched with silver. He was dressed in khaki, with boots laced to his knees. On his head was a broad-brimmed felt hat, set well back from a seamed, sun-burned forehead.

"Hands up!" he repeated, as he swaggered into the room with a devil-may-care air. It was quite evident from his manner, that he had been drinking. He was by no means intoxicated, but was, in the picturesque language of that locality, slightly "lit-up."

Janet dropped the negative from her trembling hands to the floor, where it shivered into a thousand pieces. The intruder paused at the sound, and removing his hat, bowed with awkward gallantry. "Excuse me ma'am," he said, "I didn't know that there were ladies present."

"What do you want?" demanded Richard.

"You," promptly responded the visitor.

"Who are you?"

"Steve Blount—marshal, Douglas. Got a warrant;" he fumbled in his pocket and produced the paper. "Here it is. Warrant for Richard Ward. Reckon you're it, ain't you?"

"On what charge?" came from the white lips.

"Fer doin' a fellow, Joe Grant, in Worcester, Mass., a year ago," replied the marshal.

"Oh, Dick, Dick!" burst out Janet in agony.

"It's too bad, ma'am," said Steve with clumsy sympathy, "I'm awful sorry. But I was sent here to get him and he'll have to go to Douglas along with me."

"All right, I'll get ready," said Richard mechanically, as he started to leave the room.

"Hold on, young feller; you stop right whar you are!" admonished the marshal. "Let the lady git your things. And please hurry, ma'am; we got to get right off."

Like one moving in an evil dream, Janet slowly crossed the room to their tiny chamber to prepare her husband's bag. It had come then—the blow they had feared for months. The girl could not think; she mechanically placed a few necessaries in a bag, and then stood for a moment, staring about, like one suddenly bereft of reason. Her eyes rested on

her husband's revolver lying on the packing box from which she had contrived a tiny dresser. She picked it up, looked at it, saw that it was loaded, and put it in her husband's grip.

Out in the living room, the marshal crossed to his prisoner: "Got a gun?" he tersely asked.

"No."

"Wall, I can't take no chances," Steve retorted. He quickly and deftly searched Richard. "All right," he added, "set down." Richard sank back in the chair by the table and buried his head on his arms.

"Oh, come son, buck up!" said the marshal not unkindly. Then his eyes fell on the whiskey bottle. He smiled—a radiant, cheerful, hopeful smile. He picked up the glass of water. "Shucks,—water!" he said in disgust. He threw the water in the sink, poured himself a dram from the bottle, tossed it off, then picked up the other glass, under the impression that it too, held water. As he carried it toward his lips, Janet came into the room with Richard's grip.

"Stop—stop!" she screamed. She threw the bag on a chair, rushed over to Steve, who had turned in amazement at her voice, and snatched the glass from him. "In Heaven's name!" she gasped.

"What's the matter?" asked Steve a bit unsteadily.

"It's poison," panted the girl, "deadly poison!"

"Poison!—hell!"

"Yes, cyanide of potassium;" Janet hurriedly explained. "I use it in my photography. I'd cut the developer with it and set it down there, just before you came. You would have been stone dead in five minutes."

Steve drew a long breath. "In five minutes—in five—" he broke off.

For a moment he regarded the pale, slender girl before him with a strange expression. "Wall, ma'am," he said at length, "I've faced death a good many times, but that's about the closest call I've ever had. So I owe you my life." He paused and studied her face again. "But what fazes me is—why didn't you let me drink it? Then your husband could have skipped out."

"I'm not a murderer," replied Janet, with fine scorn, nor is my husband. Although he killed Joe Grant, he did it to defend me, just as you would have defended your wife."

"Sho' now, is that it?" inquired the marshal, with genuine commiseration in his voice. "Wall, wall, I'm plumb sorry to be mixed up in this here business; that's what I am. But," he added firmly, "I got to take him. He'll have to go 'long with me."

"Oh, he'll go," responded Janet bitterly, "and so will I." She picked up a long cloak lying on a chair.

"Got a horse?" asked Steve laconically, of Richard.

"My horse died this morning," Richard answered, with a lump in his throat, as he thought of the beautiful animal he had loved, lying out in the corral under the blanket. He couldn't even bury him now.

"I've got two," returned Steve. "I'll give your wife one, and you'll ride with me." Something jingled in his pocket; he lifted out a pair of handcuffs; Richard turned ashen.

As Janet threw her cloak about her, she saw the shattered negative on the

floor at her feet. With housewifely instinct, she bent and lifted the pieces. Going up to the window, from which she had not drawn the curtain that morning, she pushed it aside and threw out the pieces of glass. Suddenly, she recoiled, dropped the glass again on the floor, hastily drew the curtain, and rushing to the door leading to the shed, shut it and dropped the great wooden bar across it. In another instant, Steve, dropping the handcuffs back in his pocket, whipped out a second revolver, and covering both husband and wife, cried out sternly, "Here, what kind of a game is this?"

"Mexicans!" whispered the girl, pointing to the window.

"Mexicans? Shucks!" returned Steve contemptuously.

"Look for yourself," said Janet. "I saw two wriggling through the brush, just back of the corral."

For a moment, Steve looked at her as if he would read her soul. Then slowly backing to the window and lifting a corner of the curtain, he peered out. Instantly, he wheeled. "Greasers! by God!" he ejaculated.

He shoved both revolvers into his belt and rushed for the sink, where a bucket of water was standing. He doused the water over his face and head. Instantly sobered, he was changed from a swaggering, half-tipsy chap, into a cool, resourceful leader. "Ward," he said tensely, "get your gun, quick."

Janet hurriedly opened Richard's grip, and taking out the revolver, handed it to her husband. "Wall, I'll be durned!" said the marshal to himself; "so the little lady had it all ready." Then aloud to Janet, "Can you shoot?"

"Yes," said the girl calmly.

"You'll do," rejoined Steve, as he handed her one of his revolvers. "There are five of them—five against three. I'll take the first one that gets in, and you, the next, Ward; then ma'am, you try for the third. Then right on, the same way, till our ammunition's gone." For an instant he paused, then added with sinister emphasis, "You keep a bullet for yourself, ma'am."

"Stand here, Ward,"—he indicated the spot,—"and you, ma'am, right there. Try not to waste a bullet. It's Estrada's gang. I know 'em." His eyes rested on the whiskey bottle. "Here," he said, "I've got to have one swig, then I'm ready for 'em."

He went over to the table, lifted the bottle, paused, and set it down again. Then he smiled—a slow, grim smile. "Quick," he said turning to Janet, "get three glasses. No questions,—quick." Janet rushed to the dresser and brought out the glasses. She was horrified to see Steve pouring the poison into the whiskey. "What—what are you going to do?" she gasped.

"I used to keep a saloon in Tombstone," Steve coolly replied. "This here is a nice Tombstone toddy I'm a-mixin' fer them greasers."

"Oh, you surely wouldn't kill them like that!" she recoiled from him in terror.

"Wouldn't I?" rejoined Steve quietly, "as quick as I would a rattlesnake. You don't know what you're up against. They're wuss'n Apaches."

He strode up to the window, the bottle in his hand. "They're still in the brush," he muttered. "They've seen my horses. They don't know how many of us are here. They're playin' a waitin' game,—standin' pat. Wall, I'll call 'em!"

Crossing to the shed door, he softly unbarred it. Placing the whiskey on the table in the shed, he beckoned to Richard. "The glasses, Ward, the glasses, quick!" Richard hastily handed them to Steve, who placed them in tempting array by the bottle, then closed and re-barred the door, slamming his huge shoulder against it. Revolver in hand, he waited.

A tense silence settled down upon the room. The three stood like statues, listening—for what? Then past the window nearest the corral, stole the five Mexicans, their silver-laced sombreros and wicked faces showing just above the sill. The silent listeners heard them enter the shed, heard a low murmur and tinkling of glasses. Some one of the gang laughed insolently. Then ensued another brief silence. "They are drinking it now," ran like lightning through Janet's consciousness. She bit her lips until the blood came, to keep from screaming.

And now a frightful medley of groans, shrieks and curses, smote upon the listening room. Then once more, silence—sudden—awful! The nerve-racked watchers dared not meet each other's glances. Their hearts pounded like hammers in their ears; their blood retreating, left them cold as death itself. The interminable moment—an eternity—went by.

"Has—anyone—passed—the window?" Steve breathed, rather than spoke, the question.

"No," whispered Richard.

"Then, by George!" thundered the marshal, "we've raked in the jack pot! Be ready now. I'm goin' to open the door." He stealthily unbarred the door and peered out, then quickly closed it.

"Done to a turn!" he cried with atrocious gaiety. He strode over to Richard and held out his hand. "Put her thar, pardner!" he said.

Richard looked at him in wonderment, then gave him his hand. The marshal put his other hand on his prisoner's shoulder. "Now you two git out 's quick 's you can. Take my horses and ride like the devil over into New Mexico. Make fer El Paso, an'——"

"But—but—I don't understand," Richard stammered. "Aren't you going to arrest me?"

"Arrest nuthin'!" roared Steve; "this hain't my day fer arrestin'."

Janet burst into tears and threw herself into a chair, sobbing violently.

"Thar now," cried the marshal, "see what you've done! Made the gamest little lady I ever run up against, break down. Ain't you ashamed of yourself? Come, git a move on ye!"

"But—what will you do?" Richard began. "How'll you get back to Douglas?"

"Oh, Lord, you make me tired!" groaned Steve. "You're the slowest fugitive I ever chased. Why, man, I know this country like a jack rabbit. I'll walk; I need the exercise. I'm a-gettin' too durned fat."

"But—how'll you explain about —about me, and your horses?"